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**Medicine Bag:
An Autoethnographic Account of Learning to Use Memory and Indigeneity
as
Resources in College Advising**

R. Saya Bobick

**Dissertation submitted
to the College of Education and Human Services
at West Virginia University**

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

**Doctor of Education in
Curriculum & Instruction**

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Samuel Stack, Ph.D.
Sharon Hayes, Ph.D.
Christine Schimmel, Ed.D.**

Department of Curriculum & Instruction

**Morgantown, West Virginia
May 2018**

**Keywords: Autoethnography, Indigenous, Feminist, Cultural Competency, Memory, Storytelling
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Abstract

Medicine Bag: An Autoethnographic Account of Learning to Use Memory and Indigeneity as Resources in College Advising

R. Saya Bobick

Autoethnography was used to investigate lived experiences of self to connect the individual to the cultural (Ellis et al., 2011). My life's recollections were gathered together in a metaphorical personal medicine bag. The use of memory work and storytelling/histories helped to "reframe the old understandings of history and memory" (Clare & Johnson, 2000, p. 210). The conceptual framework was situated within an autoethnographic approach that included three components. The first component was Indigenous ideas, which included memory as a process of decolonization, telling stories past-present-future, and oral traditions/histories. The second included feminist ideas about memory with descriptions of memory work theory. The framework's third component was the process of culturally competent academic advising. Narratives were used to empower and resist othering as explained by Fine (1994) in *Working the Hyphens*. The use of autoethnography provided space within the research process for issues of multiple identities in marginalized spaces. My findings helped to answer how complex, shifting, and sometimes fluid intersections of my identities influenced the formation of decolonizing advisory relations in my role of academic advisor. Autoethnographic memory work facilitated a deeper understanding of the roles of my identities in these relations. Opportunities to thoughtfully engage with social concepts were revealed through autoethnography, Indigeneity, and memory work. This scholarly spiritual expedition filled the metaphorical medicine bag to exhibit fragmented thoughts, ideas, experiences, and memories that informed my role as an advisor. My medicine bag now carries the woven threads that inform Indigenous, feminist, and culturally competent approaches to academic advising.

Dedication

For Helen and George, my parents

“You see, we may encounter many defeats, but we must not be defeated.

It may even be necessary to encounter the defeat, so that we can know who we are.

So that we can see, oh, that happened, and I rose.” – Maya Angelou

Acknowledgements

To my committee members, Dr. Melissa Sherfinski, chair, Dr. Samuel Stack, Dr. Sharon Hayes, and Dr. Christine Schimmel, my deepest appreciation for your affirmation and encouragement throughout this process. My unconventional scholarly study was possible thanks to your participation and agreement. I would especially like to express my deepest gratitude to my chair, Dr. Melissa Sherfinski, for your time, expertise, invaluable support, and generosity of spirit. Your assistance made all of this possible.

I would like to acknowledge three of my former professors who have since passed away that played crucial roles at the beginning of this procedure, Dr. Patricia Obenauf, Dr. Ruth Kershner, and Dr. Daniel Hursh. You have all contributed to my journey of learning and it was an honor to have known you.

I am thankful for those I met during my WVU graduate studies. Dr. Kasi Jackson, Cathy Jasper, Dr. Jennifer Orlikoff, and Dr. Brian Jara were the positive and encouraging faces of the Women's & Gender Studies department. I am also appreciative of the opportunity to know Ms. Carroll Wilkinson as the Women's Studies librarian during my time there, as well as Ms. Bonnie Brown, coordinator of the Native American Studies program.

I am grateful to have worked for Dr. Richard Montgomery and his wife at Fieldcrest Hall. While there I was privileged to meet and work beside the outstanding Travis Hapney. Your enduring friendship is one of my most valued since returning to school.

I acknowledge many friendships made in graduate school such as Sera, Zoa, Leilani (now deceased), and Allyson, among others. Dr. Melissa Chesanko modeled in her daily life the concepts of feminism. So fortunate to have met such dynamic women.

“When I dare to be powerful – to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid.” –Audre Lorde

I would like to express my gratitude for other educators I was fortunate to have encountered in my life. I have always held my learning experiences with them close to my heart. In elementary school, Mrs. Goll, Miss Sennett, Mrs. Hartley, and Miss Waro. In junior high, Mr. Billingsley, and in high school, Mrs. Mamula--true examples of academic lifelines for me. During these times, I had cherished friendships with Anne, Karen, and Diane, among others.

As an undergrad, Mrs. Elizabeth Douglas, Dr. John Cruzan, and Mr. Rudy Fatula were encouraging instructors in a sea of uncertainty. I remember fondly my college roommate, Erma, and dear friend, Rosemary--you both were a few of the reasons I thrived while there.

I am extremely grateful to my current supervisor, Mr. Scott Carlton, for giving me a chance to serve as an academic advisor. You said you saw in me great desire; thank you for this challenge and opportunity. Also appreciative of Claire and my many professional academic advisor colleagues--I am in awe of your professionalism, expertise, and collegiality.

“We do not want riches but we do want to train our children right. Riches would do us no good. We could not take them with us to the other world. We do not want riches. We want peace and love.”—Red Cloud (Mah piya Luta), Oglala Lakota

This research would not have been possible without the light, spirit, and acceptance of the dear elder Indigenous women at the senior center. Oh, how you graciously opened a door of profound friendship to me. Karen B., I will never forget you calling me back that morning, and welcoming me with open arms. My time with you has been some of the dearest memories that I hold. How blessed I am to call you friend! Times working shoulder to shoulder with you and your sister, Honey, or with you and Cara Leta, are precious to me. Cara Leta B., you graciously opened your home to me; I am humbled by your friendship also. Karen & Cara Leta—I am honored to have met such strong, caring, talented, and loving women!

“Oh Great Spirit, whose voice I hear in the winds, and whose breath gives life to all the world - hear me - I come before you, one of your children. I am small and weak. I need your strength and wisdom. Let me walk in beauty and make my eyes ever behold the red and purple sunset. Make my hands respect the things you have made, my ears sharp to hear your voice. Make me wise, so that I may know the things you have taught my People, the lesson you have hidden in every leaf and rock. I seek strength not to be superior to my brothers, but to be able to fight my greatest enemy, myself. Make me ever ready to come to you, with clean hands and straight eyes, so when life fades as a fading sunset, my spirit may come to you without shame.”—a prayer from Yellow Hawk (Ci-tan-gi), San Arc Lakota

I would like to thank family members, Uncle Johnny, and my dearly departed Uncle Bronko & Aunt Saya for your friendship and encouragement throughout my life. I am also thankful for the support of Sandi and Jim, my sister-in-law and brother-in-law: model educators all through their lifetimes.

To Lou and Dady, thank you for your unconditional friendship and support—it was my lucky day to have met the two of you!

I dedicated my paper to my parents, Helen and George. They were my first educators and instilled in me a love of learning. I am so thankful for them.

To my dear son, Steve, you are a light and a gift in life; a true blessing from above. You are valued, courageous, intelligent, powerful, and loved.

To my husband, Tom, your love, assistance, encouragement, and support bless my life. I am so happy and honored to share the journey with you.

Most of all I would like to honor my Lord who inspired me to start this educational expedition and is the ultimate author of all my stories.

*“Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles.”
Isaiah 40:31*

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Chapter 1: Rationale

A perennial problem in the literature on academic advising has been the challenge of providing diverse students with a culturally sustaining and informed approach (Mitchell & Rosiek, 2005; Purgason et al., 2016; Strayhorn, 2014).

Specifically, the challenge has been finding approaches that encompass being a cultural navigator through responsive and relevant academic advising that is inclusive and that values non-western models.

There needs to be a development of decolonizing academic advising relationships. These decolonized spaces challenge the hegemonic relationships in established advising. To decolonize makes space for changing and challenging how the world is viewed from a culturally inclusive standpoint. The spiritual as well as the scholarly can be embraced in such a research journey.

In this effort I need to examine the intersections of my identity. A person has a multiplicity of characteristics that may define them. My identities are acknowledged from the viewpoint of my cultural, my community, and in our society. My identities are also defined as how I see myself. I recognize how I may be considered without letting those views define me. I am more than the perceptions of others. Intersectionality, the interconnectedness of societal categorizations, holds my various identities. This same intersectionality of identities is brought by me into academic advising relationships.

A related problem for advisors of undergraduate students has been the issue of finding an appropriately holistic approach, particularly within the current state of higher education, in which decision-making is increasingly defined by neoliberal logic rather than relationships between advisors and students (Guiffrida, 2016; Kadar, 2001). By

neoliberal logic I mean an approach that is at odds with social justice and rights of all individuals, with inclusion made for those traditionally disenfranchised (Lefebvre & Thomas, 2017). Examples of neoliberal logic include the corporatization of education and complementary methods that embrace business operations as having rights traditionally granted to individuals.

A more holistic approach to academic advising in higher education embraces social justice policies and the inclusion of all students. Students that have been disenfranchised should have a voice in their college education and within the academic advising experience (McClellan, 2007). Students need a shared space for making the most of their educational experiences. I must conduct research from my perspective and background to have a more inclusive study into these relationships.

Furthermore, these issues have been compounded by a prescriptive “feminization” of advising in which particular gendered assumptions about who should be advisors, and how advisors should and should not support students affect not only the nature of advising and the advising relationship, but they affect the identity of the advisor as well (Rajecki & Lauer, 2007). That is because the complex and multiple resources, identities, and standpoints that an advisor might leverage are violated when social scripts and policies constraining the nature and roles of advisors are present and enforced.

My dissertation project seeks to push back against commonplace notions of advisors and advising by starting with my own complicated story of becoming an advisor late in life. I draw on all of my life resources through autoethnography in order to disrupt the commonplace, but also to document a framework and process that I have

personally used in my work to reconceptualize advising as rooted in relationships. These relationships are the foundation for my scholarly spiritual journey through my remembrances, recollections, and reminiscences in education.

Throughout history people have used talismans and amulets to encourage positive spirituality. One's being needs to be infused with the ability to work and learn during a student's opportunities in college. In this vein, a spiritual medicine bag, like those used by Indigenous societies, may be used as a metaphor in becoming the best academic advisor possible during my educational journey.

As a fellow advisor once shared with me, we are both here because our sense of self required that we use our memories, our identities as the first members of our families to go to college, to pay that forward in a sense through the very work of our professional lives. This has brought meaning to our labors beyond what we may personally become and achieve. We are academic advisors in higher education.

In this pursuit, I strive to find how the intersections of my identities may influence forming a space for decolonized academic advising that would support understanding of my roles in advising relationships.

My Story

When I entered graduate school as a late-in-life student, I decided to research elder Indigenous women. This interest surfaced in large part because my mother passed away the first summer of my return to graduate school. My mother was Indigenous, and I wanted to honor my mother's memory by spending time with Native women, taking part in handiwork that was *their* art. My mother had always made everything for us and our home through her sewing, cooking, and art. I was fortunate to find a group of elder

Indigenous women who reminded me of my mother's practices, and as I visited and grew to know them in my early years of graduate school to the present, there has been a gradual unfolding of our life experiences together. This shared experience has in many ways formed who I currently am as an educator, advisor, and mentor to others.

I entitled this dissertation *Medicine Bag: An Autoethnographic Account of Learning to Use Memory and Indigeneity as Resources in College Advising* for a specific reason. A medicine bag (Figure 1 below) is a small pouch worn as a necklace. It is often used by a healer or storyteller. Supposedly no one should know what is inside. It does NOT have to be a secret. It usually contains something of meaning to the wearer: a token, heirloom, dried medicinal plants, even a note or poem. It should have important spiritual and social significance. Medicine bags were used in the past during Indigenous healing ceremonies. It can serve as an inspirational metaphor or a container of wisdom, strength, protection, courage, healing, and power. A medicine bag can be a reminder of the past; sometimes, the best "medicine" is *remembrance*.



Figure 1-1. My Alaskan Medicine Bag

As I will explain, this dissertation draws from my own fragmented, blurring, and contextual memories as a resource for my advising practices, using autoethnography as my method. The medicine bag metaphor is symbolic of my past, present, and future journey. There are many things that are dear to me that I did not bring when I left West Virginia for Washington State in January of 2017 for my new position in the advising department of a diverse college in the Pacific Northwest with a significant Indigenous population in the student body. Among these are two medicine bags. One is lilac and purple beaded; I received it when I gave a presentation at my first National conference in Portland, Oregon. It was made by an Indigenous woman from that region. The second one is made from seal skin. It is red and black, and embellished with seal fur. I received that one during my immersion experience in Alaska at the town of Talkeetna. These bags signify important events in my life, and are artifacts that spur me to remember my experiences with Indigenous women, an important resource for this project.

I originally thought that learning from elder Indigenous women might be a foundation for a dissertation research proposal. For a variety of reasons, this did not work out, and my research interest appeared to be futile. Then, I learned about a research approach called autoethnography. Through this means, I could draw upon my educational journey through past, present, and future, and honor my mother and my experiences with Indigenous women—the group of elder women who had befriended me. In addition, I could also draw upon other important individuals and circumstances that have shaped my journey.

At first blush, I embraced doing research via autoethnography. Reading works by authors such as Gloria Anzaldua reinforced the attractiveness of this approach. The approach called to the dissenter that dwells deep inside, the one that challenges

authority in her heart, and despises any constrictions to naming my experiences that come from both outside and within (Anzaldua, 2012). Then I paused. Me, an older, nontraditional, doctoral student would tackle such an approach? I would put pen to paper (actually fingers to keyboard), and recall and relay stories of *my* life for all to read, knowing that, in this age of the Internet, my words could long live past me? Not an attractive thought for me. How would I, how could I transcend my reservations?

I was prepared to do research where I would carefully obfuscate the identity of my participants, but it's pretty hard to escape the fact that these stories would be about the author—about me. The “I” with nowhere to hide was an inconvenient and horrible thought. Even when writing term papers for graduate school, I would often get comments back from instructors saying how they could tell I was a former science major. I was practiced at keeping a so-called objective stance in my writing, being careful to never include the personal, no matter that the personal is in itself political.

This proposed research came about as a decolonized way of completing my educational study. Decolonized research resists the systems of power and domination that originated with Northern and Western European colonizers (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Decolonized research seeks to find space in academia for those voices previously marginalized and seen as “less than.” Thus, I would become the object as well as the author of my investigation; both participant and observer. As I had been disenfranchised (othered) in my life in many ways, I would use this in the examination of my learning process. I aim to push back and decolonize my own approach to research; to use my “rebel within” to examine my education through life's passages.

Decolonized research seeks to be a framework that disturbs the controlling environment of settler colonialism as seen in the dominant modes of modern society (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Using this means of research resists a settler nativism that might position me based on an ancestor's Indigenous past. This research does not claim a tribal membership long lost to my female relative, but to embrace what is "incommensurable rather than what is common" (Tuck & Yang, p.28). It is a change in approach to embrace and contrast without any aim of reconciliation; to offer another perception of justice that holds a decolonizing perspective.

Although I have my own issues that have placed me in the margins, I must avoid using another's pain to show my sensitivity and empathy in this study (Razack, 2007). Whether talking about relatives from the past or attempting to show parallels with my Indigenous friends, I need to be deliberate in not using the pain of others to illustrate something about myself and recognize power relationships in a shared history that needs to be acknowledged.

I seek to push against those cultural and social facts that weigh the complexities of the positive, as well as the negative in the exploration of educational equity. It is not easy to live with the shifts and projections made in the process of uneasy hybrids (Lucey, Melody, & Walkerdine, 2003). I am the product of a lower socio-economic background where educational success was not encouraged or valued. It appeared to be a space for those more fortunate in their economic circumstances and in their ethnicity. There is a discomfort that comes with being aware of these differences even from an early age.

In this I hope to explore transformational intersectionality that is so often emphasized in women's and gender studies (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013). Transformational

intersectionality takes me beyond the interwoven aspects of identity to a space where perspective and privilege gives way to social and cultural equity. I want to use this frame of analysis to challenge the way things are now. Intersectionality can inform my considerations of alignments of power in our present society. This can bring together the relationship between identity and power which is within today's collective consciousness. With a commitment to decolonization, I hope to use intersectionality in my analysis of barriers to educational liberation as found in the advising space within higher education. It is there that can be found interlocking oppressions containing a matrix of sameness and difference in a dynamic manner.

Further exploration of societal labels lies within a matrix of domination which sees the interconnections of race, class, and gender (Hill Collins, 1991; Warner, 2008; Winker & Degele, 2011). Although Hill Collins frames this within black feminist thought, she expanded it to include all humans labeled as other; all humans that have been compared or likened to nature. Within this societal matrix, voices of the subjugated are relegated to knowledge production privileged by dominant and unyielding dynamic power structures that resist change. Keeping those on the margins within a view of not being trustworthy takes away their agency and effectiveness. This matrix seeks to disenfranchise to keep control of the community at large. These interlocking means of oppression demean a person's experience within a dominant society and seek to devalue their opposition to their own repression.

I want to open an individual space within these overlapping cultural contexts and interlocking forms of domination. My own consciousness and knowledge production has been made through experiences with dominant society. As an individual I have a foundation in these frameworks that include race, social class, age, gender, religion, and sexual orientation. Gender

expression, disability, and body shape are also means by which the matrix of domination can structure oppression through their specialized thought processes.

I am seeking empowerment as I try to reject knowledge production that perpetuates dominant norms while I embrace decolonizing stances. I acknowledge that I am a member of many dominant groupings, as well as subordinate collections. I present as white, cisgender, hetero, a person of faith, and know English as my first (and only) language. I am also female, old, fat, disabled, multiethnic, and born into a specific branch of faith that is unknown to many. Though weight, age, and hairstyle have affected my appearance now to the contrary, my past includes presenting to others as multiethnic and, at times, androgynous.

I have rebelled during my life against preconceived notions of what I would do and how I should behave. I did not embrace the naysayers and their limitations. Where I have seen others verbally resist, I grew my resistance from within. My actions, though desperate at times, bucked convention and refused to contend with the role that others in my sphere thought I should embrace. Understanding this rebellious identity was locked away from my own consciousness, though it was surely evident to outsiders from the actions I have taken. It is not easy to share my thoughts, reasoning, and impetus for my life course. This dissertation is in itself evidence of my inner conflicts and outer sojourn. It is resistance work, my way of confronting and facing my memories as I conduct research and travel on my past-present-future educational odyssey (Hale, 2012). My autoethnographic memory is the place where my personal experiences and reflections serve to describe and understand wider social and cultural meanings that I will use in my role as an educator, advisor, and mentor.

My Childhood

I came from a town that was known as a steel-working town in western Pennsylvania. My parents came from ethnically diverse backgrounds. Only my mother completed high school. My father was taken out of school to support his family. There were all the experiences associated with poverty, either in my immediate family or with our relatives and in our community circle. There were dire economic circumstances, a lack of value and emphasis on toward education, physical violence, addiction, and despair. There was a slow progression on my part as I started in a small way in elementary school to help other students. My first-grade teacher stated to my parents that she really had nothing else to teach me at that level without leaving the other students behind. She placed me and another student who was in need of special attention in an empty room so that I might engage in what would be now called peer education. This is a distinct memory of my initial social identity in school (as poor, ethnic, etc.) to the transformation to one possessing talents that might be used in service to others. These memories power my narration as I came to recognize and acknowledge those events from my past that inform and inhabit my current professional identity as an academic advisor (Bartlett, 2007).

Figure 2 below shows a montage that represents the fragmented nature of my identities, through my memory, as I recall them. The photo is of me, as a young girl at school, as I describe above. The image draws me into memory, but the memories are not always crystal clear. Lyrics to certain songs, as well, provoke my memories; these mediums are the kinds of things in my metaphorical medicine bag. The process is by no means

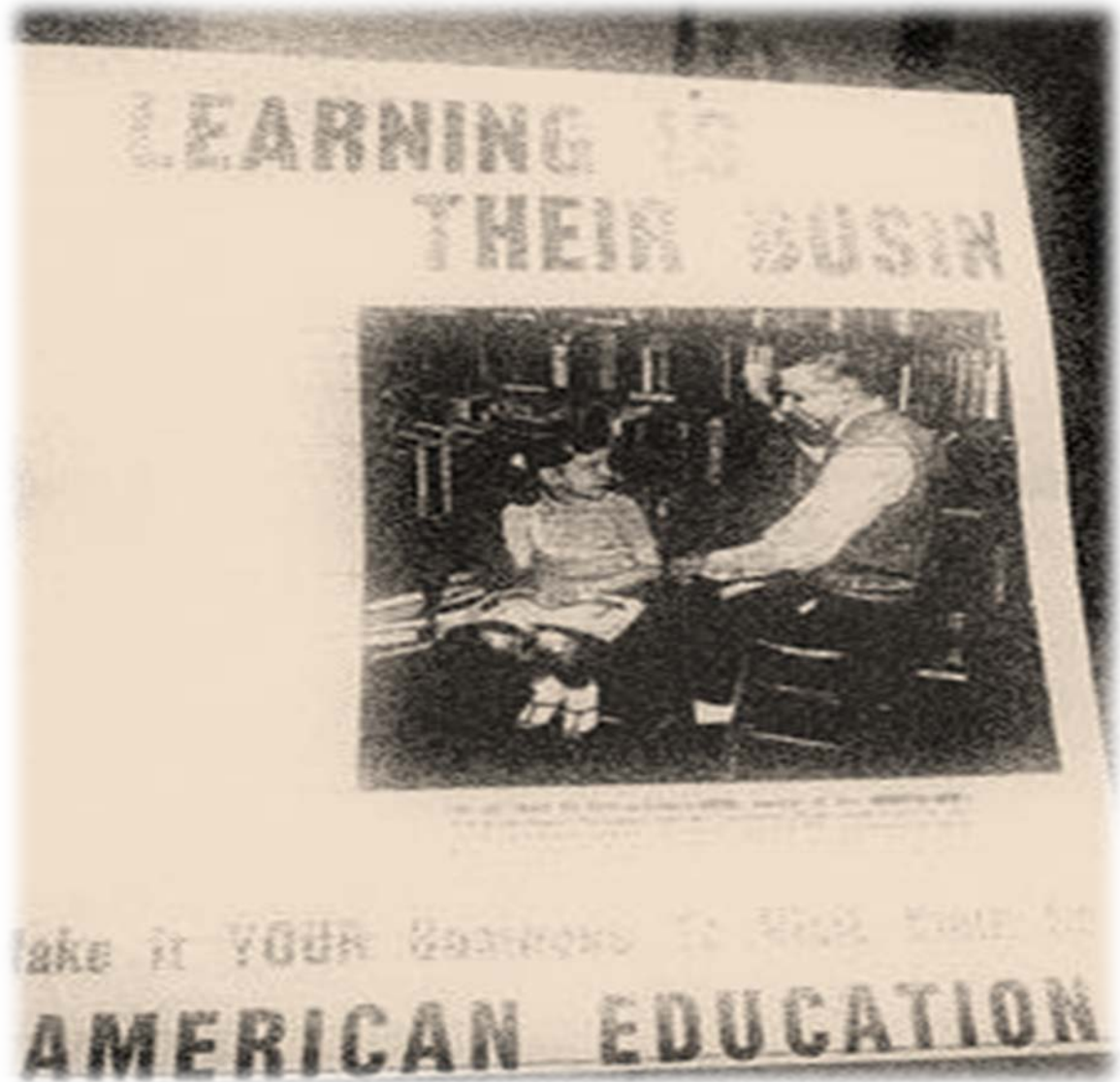


Figure 1-2. First grade picture in local paper

romantic and it is sometimes serendipitous, rather than ritualistic that I come across the contents and allow it to be revealed to me. The process brings pain as it brings wisdom and healing. Figure 1-3 displays thoughts of first grade along with my beaded medicine bag from Oregon.

*Messing with
my brain when
you want to
see me fall...*

*Have you no
mercy? No
mercy?*

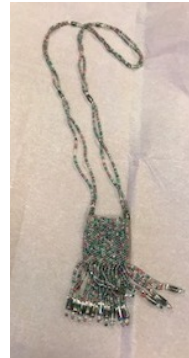


Figure 1-3. Thoughts of first grade + my beaded medicine bag from Oregon

Just as social and cultural events, traditions, and objects may be an illustrative part of an Indigenous student identity, there are meaningful pieces of my life that together make crucial pathways to my identity (Barlett, 2005). I grew up in a faith that was often not understood by those of similar beliefs, such as those who practiced Protestantism and Catholicism. As a follower of Eastern Orthodoxy, I was a Christian, like those Coptic

Christians sadly often under attack in Egypt. Early on, I had to learn that part of learning about my identity was to learn about the origins of my faith, and to be a tiny defender of the faith of my heritage. As I thought as a child, and sometimes stated to questioning classmates, “No, Protestant classmate, I do not *worship* Mary as you apparently think Catholics do. And by the way, check out your European history. The religion of my relatives parted ways in a schism in 1054; however your religion had its genesis in the 16th century from the Roman Catholic church via the Protestant Reformation.” Yes, part of my early cultural identity was to educate those who felt that to be poor and not part of the dominant society was to be ignorant and uneducated. The world of books, found in our local library, was a valuable resource in defense of my evolving identity, as well as my sense of self (Bartlett, 2007).

There was always push back from me as a child, a meager attempt of *learning* to transgress on my part (instead of bell hooks’ well-thought out *teaching* to transgress). For example, in the fifth grade I told my teacher that Mount Rushmore was ugly and that I didn’t know why the faces of old presidents had to be carved in mountains precious to the Sioux Indians (now more correctly addressed as Lakota). My impertinence was rewarded with a slap to my face! Not a stranger to physical punishment within my home, I do however remember this as one of three times in school that a teacher touched me. The construction of knowledge is continually formed due to social interactions and out of necessity to a sense of self and how that person is perceived. I understood early on that the truth can sometimes be representative of those structures already in place, those already in power. The truth and role of memory may be simply stated

as *whose* truth and *whose* memories (Hale, 2012).

Honestly, I don't know why I had the insight to understand or the ability to reason and question. I view at this as a matter of faith and spirituality. There was much that I questioned, and much punishment that I endured. I think having a sibling also enabled me to see my background through other eyes. Yes, you can beat and whip me, and I may absorb what you say, but when seen through the empathy for others, whether a sibling, relative, or classmate, the words and the actions have special meaning that stay with you throughout life. By connecting with the students I advise through empathy and through understanding what it is like to be in higher education while employed, I can relate through my past. When they speak to me about the lack of tangible assistance from family or community due to ignorance or disinterest, I can attach to my past perspective. This does not mean in any way that I am only able to relate to them through my own experiences. This means that I am trying to actually occupy those uncomfortable spaces that bell hooks (nom de plume of Gloria Jean Walkins which always appears in lower case) (1994) speaks to where real transformative learning may take place.

Memories from a female narrative that are autobiographical in nature versus those by males have been examined in research to uncover gender differences. It appears that gender identity plays a larger part in recall than gender itself when studying these autobiographical narratives (Grysman & Fivush, 2016). More often researchers look at stereotypical gender identity as a means of comparison for predicted memory. My memories will fill my autoethnographic study as I examine my educational experiences that have brought me to the place where I am fortunate to be employed in academic advising in a university setting.

Academic Advising in the Northwest

I was pleased to have been offered the employment opportunity that I had been searching for, namely, a position as an academic adviser for a small state university in the Pacific Northwest. My position is as an academic advisor in the department of professional advising. It is traditionally seen as one that is primarily concerned with curricular and academic standing of a student, supposedly taking an authoritarian stance that is responsible for the student's academic standing (Mitchell & Rosiek, 2005). I am fortunate that my department, through my supervisor, seeks to incorporate a more holistic developmental advising style that does not take responsibility for the student's academic progress. That responsibility is the student's alone, with support through avenues like academic advising. I am the academic advisor for over 600 students, mainly consisting of students in the Department of Engineering Technologies, Safety, and Construction, as well as a small percentage studying in the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences.

It is important to me to be employed doing the type of work I had hoped to be engaged in at this stage of my life. I am also glad to be in a most breathtakingly beautiful part of our country, and in an inclusive academic atmosphere. The state where I am now employed is home to thousands of immigrants and refugees. I am fortunate that both the university and state believe that the diversity of peoples, cultures, and ideas is essential to learning, discovery, and creative expression within the experience of higher education. There are approximately 33% students of color on our campus, with 25% of faculty and staff being non-white. These statistics constitute a high level of ethnic diversity for a rural university, and are illustrative of the university's outreach and commitment to inclusion.

The university serves approximately 12% of their student body as first-time, full-time degree-seeking students. The vast majority of students are transfer students, returning students, and part-timers. They have a 79% retention rate which compares favorably with a 70.9% national average. Since graduation rates nationally are based on first-time, full-time degree-seeking students, this must be kept in mind when looking at our university's average of 53.4% in light of the national average of 60%. This university also has a male success initiative in place to address the retention and graduation rates that are the lowest for male students of color. This regional, comprehensive public university is the fastest growing college in our state.

My university is one of only two in this state, and one of 14 nationally to be recognized as a "National role model" for its commitment to diversity by Minority Access, Inc., a National organization that honors diversity in academic access and achievement. This university of approximately 12,000 students has also been honored among the Nation's top 50 lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender-friendly universities. It is the only four-year institution in the state to receive a Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award. This award is the only National higher education diversity honor. It is one of only 92 colleges and universities in the U.S. recognized for having a sustained commitment to expand diversity and inclusion on their campuses.

I think all of this is accomplished by the university having a real, tangible commitment to outreach, diversity, and inclusion. When there was one negative incident on campus after the presidential inauguration, it was dealt with swiftly. Reading about it assured me that this was a place that put their words into action. Within the advising space, we are expected and encouraged to create a safe, welcoming space for students that is inclusive. Although we are considered to be academic advisors in professional advising, we strive for a developmental,

holistic approach to advising in order to serve the students, their departments, and the school. Resources are detailed for academically challenged students, even in our written notices to them. Though there is a kind of quantification or corporatization of the students and services we offer, there is no time or expediency requirement that we must fulfill. Each student has individual needs and requirements that should be addressed.

Just as feminism, which I view as equity for all regardless of the social constructs at play, weaves the political with the personal, so can finding one's voice be realized when approaching education research from an individual perspective. Coming from a lower socio-economic background and working class foundation reinforces how I find a voice in my work. My voice serves my reflections on social and political experiences, and gives way to nonhierarchical thinking and acting. Analyzing my educational voyage is a means to engage learning in the community when interacting with students in higher educational settings in my present position as an advisor, which I will explain more about in the next section. Through my proposed research, I will examine my voice, background, and circumstances that brought me to this place. With this research, I can state my right to be heard as I enable others to state their concerns in safe educational spaces (hooks, 1994). Safe educational spaces promote the exchange of ideas where others may disagree, but honor one's right to the learning process. Safe spaces are also places where we can all practice and test what is being taught, and where we can decide, fashion, and unfold our educational progression (hooks, 1994).

This study is a small movement toward inclusion over exclusion where the entire learning community is valued (Anzaldua, 2012). Individual voices of resistance can embolden histories, stories, and dreams of people on the margins who were previously given little notice (Anzaldua, 2012). Where else but in a small research study, such as this, could a voice such as mine be

heard? Until my discovery of autoethnography as a tool of opposition, I never thought that there was a space in the world for one such as me. I never have thought that by examining my journey there might be a gradual unfolding of resistance that can have a place and that it may be used by me as an academic advisor.

Serendipity in Life and Memory

Thinking about what brought me to this point is linked to a variety of threads, including stories used in examination of identity or self-reflection, such as a then-new program at the West Virginia University (WVU). A decade ago, *Mom's Turn to Learn* was promoted through WVU's Women's Studies Department; this Master of Arts program brought me back to college. My son and my partner had both spied an advertisement for this new program in our local paper. My son was an undergraduate at the time, and had taken a Women's Studies course. He encouraged me to forget following him and my partner into Engineering and to forge my own path instead. His friends had wondered how he did so well in Women's Studies, and he gave me the credit. The course had covered many topics that I had talked about while raising him. I thought that I might give *Turn to Learn* a try for a semester before officially applying to graduate school, to see if this was something that I may have an interest in. Taking those courses recommended by the Women's Studies department intersected with my role of caretaker, a role filled by many women, and some men, who support children, partners, and elder relatives simultaneously. Being a caretaker is sometimes seen as part of gender identity, a female as nurturer, though it can also be seen as a facet of one's identity—not expressive of a person as a whole.

It was for me a wonderful happenstance coming back to school. I got into the Master's program. I decided what my research focus would be, and then eventually met and

worked with a group of elder Indigenous women. From there I entered a doctoral program in Curriculum and Instruction, which was a dream, a distant memory held close, as a vision unrealized. Since I was young, I always had the interest in achieving the goal of earning a doctoral degree. There is a line in a song that I love that says, “You’re living in a fantasy world,” and I do tend to look to my senses, my visions of what might be, even at this point in my life.

Quite recently, the first time I presented at a tribal college, I told the two women in front of me in line at a barbeque that years ago I had actually driven past the conference venue site as my son and I visited a National park. I also told them that I felt in my heart at the time that it must be too wonderful to work there. These kind and sensitive women replied that I took my vision and made it happen. I breathed life into my hopes from my faith into a reality that was now happening.

When it all seemed to be out of my reach, I was offered a full-time position doing the work I wanted, undergraduate academic advising, in a region that I only could have hoped to live in, the Pacific Northwest. I think at times that only other people get to realize their dreams; that only other people get to make great changes in their lives, to move to a place where one might really want to live. When my son had to travel to the Pacific Northwest for the first of two summers doing an internship during his junior and senior years, I was viscerally struck by the place. Perhaps it harkened back to my early childhood, walking to and from school for miles in the southwestern Pennsylvanian hills and forests. Or perhaps it resonated with remembrances of those who came before me. There were herding ancestors, the Sami peoples in Siberia, and Native peoples of northwest Canada. The wide-open spaces and beautiful vistas called to a part of me that I never thought would have a voice in my life.

Working with life and memory has led me to examine how my own identity was created while taking a critical look at how I am received by others (Bartlett, 2005). This is all done through a singular perspective within a scholarly journey. It's odd to think of my stories in relation to others, in a social context, through my history, my stories, and my learning outcomes (Bartlett, 2007). How do I look at this examination of identity through culture with a critical eye? I must approach my life in a more scholarly and organized manner for sense-making. I need to step out of my comfort zone into a critical research format to discuss my medicine bag of treasures and enable my dissertation study to be conducted.

Thinking of identity and culture brings to mind creative spirits, spiritual journeys, and a freedom of soul. I have had a sense of this my whole life, though I've seldom expressed it to others. To me, mind, body, heart, and spirit are all parts of the human condition. I have had visions; I have had certain feelings or senses that have been part of my life. These are certainly not easy things to share, let alone put into words. Words can relay these concepts in a distinct way, as perhaps they were embraced in their cultures of origin.

In Russian, I can refer to my *dusha* (soul) and my *dukh* (spirit). In Onondowaga [the Seneca are the keepers of the western door of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) peoples] one would think of *notwai'sha* (spirit) and *tain'tciade* (heaven world). In addition, Cree, which is one of the largest groups of First Nations of Canada, uses the word *manitowan* to express something spiritual, or of a spirit nature. The creative generosity of a Slavic woman, a Seneca elder, and a First Nations woman introduced me to these words.

When I visited Alaska during my return to graduate school, I met a woman who served as a model for some figures in an exhibit. As she relayed to me the scorn she felt at being portrayed as the museum saw fit, and not as she presented herself, we became close in our short time together. I relayed to her my interest to learn more about a female ancestor from Canada. The very last time I saw her she was hurrying to stop me as I was leaving the museum. She said that she had a remembrance which she told me of, to say that I was on the right path. These words describe the memory, spiritual, and soul work ahead in the revelation of my life stories held dear to me in my medicine bag.

My stories, like the one I just discussed, serve as a foundation for meaning-making while using them in an instructional framework as I advise undergraduate students (Archibald, 2008). Coincidences and collisions may occur. In fact, a major schism was revealed recently when I was reading Anzaldua's (2012) story of adding lime to corn in a process called nixtamalization. In this process, the mixture swells and softens, while community women work together to make dough balls to be used for bread. Anzaldua's story recalled a memory of when I stayed at an Indigenous friend's home after a profound trauma in my life. There in her home, I found the comfort and respite that had escaped me in West Virginia. In this Indigenous community, I found acceptance even though I had gained a significant amount of weight while coping with my sadness. These women offered me comfort and they encouraged me to continue learning.

During one such visit, my friend asked me about Wikipedia while she was making Indian corn soup. She was unfamiliar with computers and she wondered if this on-line reference tool could retrieve the process of using ash and lime to soften Indian corn, a skill she had learned when she was young. Through my computer savvy and familiarity with Wikipedia, I was able to digitally contribute to her working through her memory in a way that contributed to her everyday

life. Occurrences like this one are too often credited to chance, where I see such meetings as my scholarly spiritual expedition. Using the power and politics of my personal memory work may lead to empowerment instead of marginalization, and embodiment instead of disenfranchisement (Hale, 2012). My medicine bag of memories grows fuller and is richer because of these friendships.

After searching for a position for almost two years, becoming an advisor is a major event in my life. My boss said that although my formal experience as an advisor was limited at the outset, both he and the search committee saw such great desire in me. It was that desire that spoke to them to offer me a position. I am continually amazed that I was the one offered this position—this life-changing and life-challenging position.

The Advising Role and Autoethnography

The national organization for academic advising in higher education the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA), the global community for academic advising. As part of academic advisors' professional development, this organization has compiled various support materials to promote best practices in academic advising. This is done, in part, by promoting core competency areas for academic advisors that encompass conceptual, informational, and relational concepts (NACADA, 2017). This promotes academic advising in relation to their institution's goals, curriculum, and mission regarding students.

"Best practices" may be critiqued from the perspective of whose standards are being followed and also by considering that possible solutions to any set of circumstances may require flexibility. There is seldom discussion regarding what is meant by the term and how one can reliably identify a *best practice* (Druey, 2013). In research that seeks to decolonize advising practices, this is important information to keep in mind.

The university where I am currently employed is located in a state with a large Indigenous population from almost thirty federally recognized tribal Nations. Many tribal governments provide higher education scholarships, and I have already met with students receiving such support from their nations. My university is also located near a large tribal Nation that is one of largest employers in the region. It has already been suggested to me to take an opportunity to visit their nation to get a rudimentary sense of their cultural perspectives on higher education, and how best to engage in outreach.

People have remarked at my travels to the other side of the country, all the way from West Virginia to the West Coast, for employment. But I have been presented with a unique opportunity for student engagement where there are populations of Native students and other diverse students enrolled in this university. There are also opportunities to engage with students from migrant populations, as well as a variety of international students. Naturally, current changes within our country may lead to a decline in students enrolling here, but the university is a welcoming place for many students from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Within the limitations of a narrative text, memories influence the nature of my identity with respect to my current employment, as well as the journey that brought me here (Bartlett, 2005). Here I am allowed to be the self that is striving to complete my education; the self that wants to serve in the capacity of educator/advisor/guide to students' opportunities in higher education. As a fellow advisor here said to me, he and I are both here because our sense of self required that we use our memories, our identities as the first members of our families to go to college, to pay that forward in a sense through the very work of our professional lives.

Those who came before me, that form the poetry of my life's journey and provide me with ancestral memories, push me to transgress and reach beyond prescribed boundaries. The memories that will fill my narrative texts can serve to honor the previous generations who had no voice or say in their lives. Their poetry, their memories live in me now, as the only remaining means to share their stories through my remembrances. These voiceless ancestors fill my memories and add to the identity of the student striving to become a scholar (Scudeler, 2011).

My memories and journey remind me to remain sensitive to each student's needs. Some want only the basics from the experiences, tailored to a specific issue that brings them to the office as expediently as possible. Others are looking for advising assistance that includes room for academic questions and exploration. Whether a student is a traditional freshman or a transfer student, I attempt to keep in mind my unspoken needs when I first entered school at 18, as well as my more recent experiences as a returning non-traditional, life-long learner. When I applied to my current position, I stated that I had a unique perspective as one who is still degree-seeking during job-seeking. I could bring to the position experience and understanding for multiple perspectives, experiences, and identities in higher education.

Research Questions

I come from a diverse background filled with a variety of experiences. When considering perspectives for study, these specific research questions frame my inquiry:

- How might the complex, shifting, and sometimes fluid intersections of my identities influence the formation of decolonizing advisory relations in my role of academic advisor at a small, culturally diverse university in the western United States?
- How might autoethnographic memory work support understanding the roles of my identities in these relations?

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

The search for a conceptual framework to guide my research study has unfolded gradually. It was a journey getting to autoethnography as the foundation to my study and so too was it a journey finding a complementary conceptual framework. Conceptual frameworks make the research surroundings discernible because they “provide insight into a researcher’s beliefs about knowledge production, in general, and how those beliefs will impact the research project” (Kovach, 2009, p. 41). Searching for and articulating the conceptual framework using theories of memory has been a studied, deliberate quest to find my way to use my beliefs and to actively act on those values (Giorgio, 2013; hooks, 1994). Specifically, I will employ a decolonizing approach that recognizes feminist theory’s contributions to the role of memory in research (Arvin, et al., 2013). I am particularly interested in theory that respects the inclusion of the intuitive, the spiritual, and the natural. I have collected different perspectives on this work to frame the study. The intuitive is knowledge based on feelings; the spiritual is intangible and based on spirit/soul or revelation; and the natural is based on what is perceived as real and actual, through reason. These three fragments of self-produce a space to embrace memory in the process of becoming (Swanson, 2000).

A conceptual framework encompasses the concepts, positions, and previous study results that serve as a path for research (Maxwell, 2005). A constructive and functional guide shows the connections of a study’s journey to unite positions in the process and have regard for the research interest, as well as an assessment of the theories and literature discovered during this search (Ravitch & Riggan, 2012). My conceptual framework supported my developing passage in this study along with the rationale for the mode of investigation and the approach found to examine my data, which are described in detail in Chapter 3. The conceptual framework (Figure 4 below) is situated within an autoethnographic approach. Important concepts are Indigenous ideas, which

include memory as a process of decolonization and telling the story past-present-future, as well as storytelling, oral traditions/histories, and memory (Arvin, et al., 2013; Lambert, 2014; Ballenger, 1997). Within the second component of the framework, feminist ideas about memory are descriptions of memory work theory, as well as an interrogation of the “dangers” of memory work (Allen & Piercy, 2005; Hirsch & Smith, 2002; Behar, 1996). Finally, the third component of the conceptual framework is the processes of culturally competent advising that support my work with students (Mitchell & Rosiek, 2005; Purgason et al., 2016; Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2008). I will explain each of these parts in this chapter.

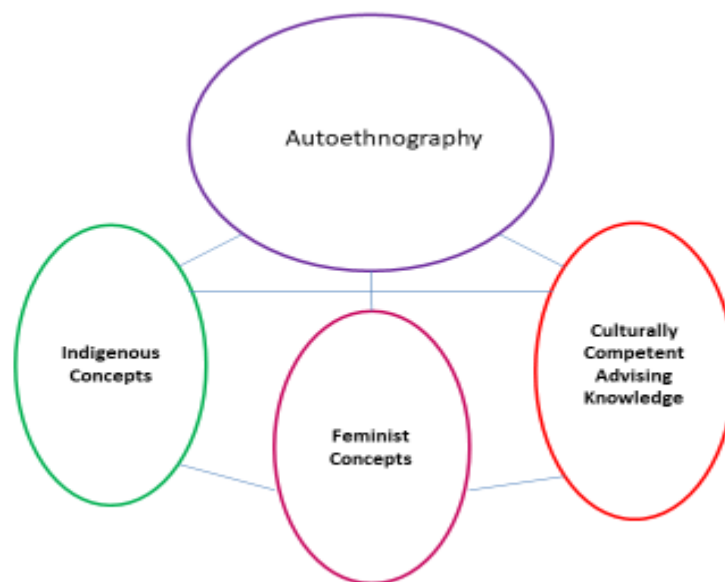


Figure 2-1. Conceptual Framework

The Autoethnographic Approach

Autoethnography is “an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience” (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 1). I explore this concept in more detail in Chapter 3 since it is my research method, but an introduction is appropriate here. The analytic framework to consider my data is situated within my journey, my autoethnographic approach to research (Denzin, 2006). In my study I will appreciate the personal; show the substance behind storytelling and memory; and value stories and memory work while accomplishing research that contributes to knowledge (Giorgio, 2013; Ballenger, 1997). In this form of research, words have communal and convenient impact in a variety of settings. A written record of words opens the prospect of numerous means of analysis.

My personal experiences, my self-reflections, will serve to find meanings in social and cultural understandings as they unfold and are revealed (Crawford et al., 1992). The written word in the form of autoethnography is a type of artifact that is able to communicate, change, and adapt to the author’s circumstances and settings. In autoethnography, the text may be manipulated, as well as be illustrative of moments in time for an author (Hodder, 2000). This will be further detailed and explained in my methodology section, Chapter 3. These moments in time, throughout my educational journey, are the basis for my research.

Though scholarly in form, autoethnography pushes beyond established and recognized forms of inquiry (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Autoethnography starts with a researcher’s life. The author contemplates the order and form of their memories and remembrances in an endeavor to carry out meaning-making to one’s existence (Fine, 1994). Autoethnography presents an avenue to express their unique occurrences into story work to investigate one person’s journey as a way to understand and to build a base for knowledge (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

Autoethnography is a type of writing that investigates many forms of lived experiences to connect the individual to the cultural. Autoethnography can take many shapes that can unfold through emotions, actions, and occurrences bracketed by a person's background, social class, and culture (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Berry & Patti, 2015; Chang, et al., 2012). Though autoethnography can take many forms such as poetry, expressive art forms, performance, or film, I shall use it via storytelling/memory work. As narrator of my recollections and stories, I hope to challenge and promote transformative learning through my work in a diverse higher education context.

Evocative personal voices are brought to my narratives in the form of autoethnography. The significance of the storytelling is intertwined within the narration. The author takes the reader on their journey to discover what may entail moments of empathy, moments that are evocative, and perhaps intentionally missing from much social inquiry (Freedman & Combs, 1996). In these times of emphasis on social justice, social awareness that can translate into knowledge is discovered through caring introspection and empathetic revelation. This is an accessible narration that may leave the scholar vulnerable while this unfolding displays information and yes, data that would have been unreachable previously (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

By disrupting standard methodology through autoethnography, narrative research gives voice to those disenfranchised and oppressed at the margins through their experiences through age, ability, class, gender/gender identity, race, and sexuality, for example. Women's lived experiences can be brought into the light and into the forefront of the construction of knowledge (Gryman & Fivush, 2016). Women's lives can give voice to their histories and those moments in their lives of interest and significance to them. For example, I mentioned in Chapter One, how my friend explained to me that she learned to process Indian corn as a young girl, and wondered

if this “new” Internet talked about her history and her experiences. I was happy to send her the information she wanted, along with a comment that I had learned so much from both her and the Wikipedia page. I would have never researched the nixtamalization process if not for her.

Autoethnography reveals the significance of lived experience of one life to all, to display in narrative that our stories may be of value and interest to others (Kimpson, 2005). By employing autoethnography, one becomes the power behind the research, the spirit of the narrative, in a self-reflective way (Hale, 2012). It is both reliable and convincing to have both the researcher and the researched as one voice in storytelling; one voice standing alone as originator and initiator of knowledge.

Forming narrative texts in scholarly writing as both observer and the observed should build up qualitative research. Using autoethnography encourages connections to the work as more direct revelations are disclosed (Richardson, 1994). Autoethnography is transgressive and challenging as an avenue of knowing, and as a means to scholarship. Social science can gain in a small manner by allowing reflexivity on the part of researchers as they examine themselves.

Issues of self in the research were always discussed in social research, but this brings the storyteller and the author into the same space as we write for and about our own lives.

Autoethnography allows evocative narration to be exhibited and placed in frameworks open for interpretation in the analytical and cultural sense (Holman Jones, 2005). The narration of one’s life, one’s lived subjective experience, is revealed through autoethnography just as others have revealed their personal lives through the texts of their social research.

Autoethnography transcends traditional social science research to embrace the subjective, and make known the personal relationship of the researcher with their study (Jenks, 2002). The experience of both doing the investigation and serving as the focus of this study resists controls

and constraints of the conventional. We can use autoethnography to follow bell hooks into those places that transgress conforming and that give voice to the previously silenced stories. The evocative, vital concerns of people's lives are what personal narratives can disclose (hooks, 1990; 1994). The outcomes and significance of these autoethnographic revelations have importance and may be helpful to further research, if only to reveal a life lived in the margins (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). As these stories divulge through autoethnography, my circumstances will serve as a background and a foundation for my study, as I expose my passages of learning in life.

Indigenous Aspects of Memory

Memory is the capacity to recall information, experiences, and impressions from the past to conduct the autoethnographic journey (Giorgio, 2013). Through the process of remembering, various perspectives come into play. One's histories, storytelling, and recollections are all the purview of Indigenous aspects of memory. Stories and histories recalled from memories serve as a reminder that the personal can indeed be politicized (Beads & Kuokkanen, 2007). Memories will serve as the genesis of my stories and histories, thus serving as the very foundation of my study.

Memory is a contentious construct. Behar (1996) sees the dread and apprehension that may occur as memories of the past and present interconnect. This interconnection makes the archive a vessel of recollection, and makes history, the situation for the establishment and structuring of memory (Nora, 1989). Nora further emphasizes different structures of modern memory: archive-memory (what was just seen), distance-memory (because the past is "given to us as radically other...a world apart"), and duty-memory (the sense of responsibility that weighs

upon the individual) (Kuhn, 2000). For the well-known researcher and autoethnographer Behar (1991), who inspires my framework, the autoethnographic journey is about *duty-memory*.

What is my duty to the Indigenous aspects of my memory in this autoethnography? I have a duty to responsibly share my stories built from memories of my educational and cultural journey (Arvin, et al., 2013). I also have a duty to be responsible toward those without a voice in my choice of memories to relay, in my choice of tales to uncover. I have a duty to use narration of memories as a center for meaning and knowledge (Swanson, 2000). I am not so simple to use or suppose that my duty memory is the *truth*. My memories, and the stories and histories they ground, will be *my truth*, and mine alone. Memory is unstable, with a hope to grasp flickers of it by connecting it to spaces and sites. Nora (1989), though, addresses these spaces and sites of memory to generate archives, preserve anniversaries, arrange celebrations, and so on because these occurrences do not hold a customary place in our lives. The historical formation of our memories brings “the past into a world of hierarchical meaning” (Swanson, p.113) to process reality and representation from our prior education to knowledge that incorporates those experiences into our social world.

The concept of memory as a type of perception can occur with the feeling of reflexivity that defines understanding (Allen & Piercy, 2005). The self can be open to differences that bring the past into the present while allowing for an historical present that values the Indigenous aspects of memory. Embracing fragmented identities can leave behind a way of thinking from a united self to a *becoming* (Swanson, 2000). This zone of becoming permits memories, storytelling, oral histories, and memory-work to have agency and purpose in this research (Ballenger, 1997). Although memories and my educational path may be reduced to cause and

effect, I am hoping that my study might transcend this to a more transformative and transgressive stance.

Memory is shown by Hirsch and Smith (2002) to inhabit the communal and personal, both the self and the cultural. Indigenous aspects of memory are positioned in the here and now, while taking us into the future; it is the meeting of one's identity and the space that sounds with the reverberations of the past (Behar, 1996). Feminist scholarship is motivated in part to delineate society from the perception of women via the recovery and addition of women's work, stories, and artifacts.

Feminist scholarship has on occasion dealt with cultural memory (Hirsch & Smith, 2002; Stephens, 2005; Winn, 2013). There is an effort to see cultural memory as a creation of personal and shared practices that form as they convey memory. Indigenous aspects of memory are seen as an almost conscious effort in the realm of presentation, demonstration, and analysis. Memories in this context are seen as mindful and purposeful. They can be automatic, iterative and compulsive (Allen & Piercy, 2005). For example, you might place me within a certain cultural background category based on my ethnicity, though I would question the validity of such a categorization. I reject being the voice in a category or a representative sample. Memories serve as reliable markers for a sense of self throughout our lifetimes (Grysman & Fivush, 2016). We can be sure to face ever changing circumstances and contexts in time through a mode that is both personal and political.

During the passage of time, cultural resources can influence our sense of self within our communities (Bartlett, 2007). Resistance can help make a "space for alternative cultural production" and allow for alternative ways of knowing (hooks, 1994). Cultural memory, in regarding the Indigenous aspects of memory, may be found where the individual and the cultural

meet (Hirsch & Smith, 2002). Dominant society may try to place individuals into a prescribed order or division to suit their preconceived ideas or biases. It is much easier to classify an individual based on their social and cultural background than to view the person as a distinct individual (Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2008). Distinctiveness, though personal or societal, is a reality that brings the present, past, and future together to bond a person to a community with its characteristic indicators. The archives of cultural memory contain past narratives, representations, and texts while acting as a conductor for entrance to them.

Feminism, Indigenous aspects of memory, and scholarship have endeavored to bring back to hegemonic cultural memory the space for memory and narratives gone from our historical documents (Lorde, et al., 1990). Feminism has transcended customary ways of knowing about the past. Theorizing cultural memory through the lens of feminism pertains to ways of questioning to the scope of cultural recall and absence (Hirsch & Smith, 2002). The marginalized and the disenfranchised voices are heard through alternate archives for their images, music, customs and presentations, material and popular culture, oral history, and silence.

Cultural memories as an aspect of Indigenous memory are a crucial component in identity formation and serve to reinforce our situated identity. Situated identity moves beyond western definitions to recognize the formation of self beyond the pursuit of wholeness or sameness (Giorgio, 2013). One is not defined by circumstances or historical experiences. Circumstances may take spaces in our memories but serve as only an aspect of our becoming (Swanson, 2000). The ongoing process of our identity forms beyond the historical to representations of intimate and personal consciousness to a more fluid status with respect to Indigenous memory. Considering identity and its connection to memory is important in the context of advising and educating because it can exceed western tradition to make space for

alternative ways of knowing through decolonization and memory. Embracing the subjective in this work allows that there will be no arrival at a point of knowledge. Decolonization and Indigenous aspects of memory acknowledge an unconventional path and approach to ontology that may provide a space for an epistemology that resists dominant convention, while embracing positive and complimentary ways of knowing (Lambert, 2014).

Memory as a Process of Decolonization

Decolonization is the means by which Indigenous peoples strive to maintain, awaken, empower, observe, and privilege Indigenous ways of being in the face of the western European exploitation of Turtle Island (North America) (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Decolonization is organic and constantly transcending an objective of arrival to a new space to embrace the formation of active appreciation for and valuation of Indigenous voices and epistemologies (Denzin et al., 2008). As Swanson (2000) stated, through our memories we can go beyond the expectation of a unified self to espouse the positive aspects of being as fragmented and fluid. Decolonization and memory allows for a space to include culture, traditions, and social identities formerly disenfranchised from western scholarly foundations.

Researchers who advocate for a decolonization paradigm discover ontology, axiology, epistemology, and methodology from an Indigenous point of view (Denzin et al., 2008). This provides a path for me as a researcher, as an advisor, and an individual to relay my stories and my memories through a process where I struggle to resist the colonizing process (hooks, 1994). This path must be filled with my memories of the dominance that I have faced in our society regarding sexism, ableism, ethnicity, and the debasement of one's socio-economic status.

Other researchers have used memory and decolonization together, but for purposes different from my research goals. Fenske and colleagues (2016), for instance, examined

colonization, decolonization, and memory in National historical cultures through memory politics. Judaken (2011) looked at multidirectional memory in the age of decolonization as it applied to Sartre and the Holocaust. Grima (2008) tied together memory and decolonization in “hybrid boundary-defying” identities while addressing her colonized self in Algeria. I have to challenge my own memory narratives to incorporate a decolonized conceptual framework. I do this to accept and respect differences that show culture and identity as unique, and at times separate, as well as inclusive.

Storytelling, Oral Traditions/histories, and Memory

Storytelling, oral histories, and the use of memory by elders and women are integral to Indigenous research (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). There is power in every person’s personal tale. New recollections add to a culture’s history where each person has a space to relay stories as communication of culture and hope for new generations.

There are challenges within this form of engaging memory. Peoples’ remembrances contain the reality of a painful past (Lucey et al., 2003). This reality can connect the physical with previous spaces and places. Responses to pain result in the eradication of memory as an intentional tactic of the domination which permeates life in Indigenous communities (Fenske, et al., 2016; Smith, 2005; Grima, 2008). Remembering is excruciating and hurtful since it entails identification of what colonization was about while also reminding people of being dehumanized and its effect on cultural practices. Historical trauma is the transmission of trauma due to loss of culture, genocide, and forced removal, among other things, through Native American generations (Yellow Horse Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Lambert, 2014). Both healing and transformation, after historical trauma, is an integral component in any approach that asks a group of people to keep in mind what they may have decided unconsciously or consciously to put out of their

minds. In these instances, storytelling and oral histories must be mindful of the memories best left unsaid.

Indigenous peoples have witnessed the curative command of stories as they reassert personal and societal narratives (Scudeler, 2011). Many tales common to an individual can be spiritual. Writing our own stories educates, while providing a sense of pride in one's history. Stories composed of oral histories and memories may be seen as a form of resistance to western conventions and ways of knowing propagated through dominant society since it permits our communal and personal memories to be valued (Morgan, 2006).

Collective memory is the shared information, knowledge, and traditions used to construct a group's identity. Collective memory is a key concept in Indigenous storytelling and history because it is seen as an echo of tales connecting people with the past and the future (Ballenger, 1997). Collective narratives that use oral histories, as well as communal and individual memories can place singular lived experience into larger contexts (Nora, 1989; Poulos, 2016). Storytelling comes from relaying the lived experiences of previous generations, and how those stories may have impact on a community's peoples or daily lives (Schwartz, 1999). Visions may allow the release of collective memory that may have lived in our physical being through our ancestors' stories (Ballenger, 1997).

I have talked to others within an educational context about their visions, while also sharing mine. These may form striking touch stones and commonalities with those who may not have previously thought that you had shared experiences (Gryman & Fivush, 2016). These memories reinforce and maintain the connection to ancestors and to families and societies (Scudeler, 2011). Poetry and ancestral memory may be used to weave these together in honor as

“ancestors are poetry that live in our own bodies and influence the way we view and understand contemporary worlds” (Scudeler, p.195).

Oral histories and memories situate storytelling in an educational context that values oral tradition (Archibald, 2008). Stories may be hidden in people’s memories, as well as obscured in people’s memories. The reawakening of forgotten stories may also reawaken the storytelling ability in Elders, an insight that is very important given my interest and vocation in advising. My encounters with Indigenous Elders and our shared experiences was the foundation for this proposed research. This is necessary if these recollections and the ability to do meaning-making from these oral histories are to stay alive (Nora, 1989). Stories may contain vital cultural knowledge and history that was traditionally told orally from memories literally embedded in physical and also in emotional beings, as well as in the consciousness and in the spirit (Poulos, 2016). Though this was a common research protocol in the past, archival material, especially stories written by outsider professionals bring concerns of misinterpretation and appropriation. This is a concern that I will need to monitor in my own research.

As I reviewed scholarly material for my study, I was fortunate that Archibald (2008) chose to include some archival source stories in order to “tickle peoples’ memories” (p.147). I was fortunate since this “tickle” or cue to one’s memories brought to mind a personal story that paralleled a story he described. By relating my story to the encounter described in Archibald’s research, I felt I could share my similar story since that researcher valued the storyteller’s revelation. The storyteller found his ancestral name in a book. It revealed the power of this name of which he was not aware. He found this to be an important story about the way his ancestor was. He then found the story in a book. When he saw it, he was excited because there was his name. After reading about it, he went to a relative, and told them about it.

Unbelievably, a similar story happened to me! While taking course work for my graduate studies, I enrolled in a class for science teachers about incorporating Native American ways of knowing in curriculum and pedagogy (Brown & Strega, 2005). I was not a prospective science educator like the other students, but rather an interested graduate student with an undergraduate degree in science. I told the professor that as a graduate teaching assistant in gender studies I was permitted, in a limited manner, to integrate science and Indigenous ways of knowing into my classes.

The history of my name, Saya, really a middle name that I use as my first name, was riddled in some mystery in my family. I had a dear aunt with that name, and now have a cousin that uses the name. As a curious person, I asked and was given a variety of unsatisfactory answers about its origins. When I visited Alaska during my immersion experience, I learned some of the story. A Haida woman that I met at a museum there had a lively discussion with me. I mentioned my name and that one family recollection said it was an Indian name from Canada. This seemed remotely possible since I knew many of my relatives, as I heard as a youth, *snuck over the border* from Canada. This was a revelation that I was forbidden to repeat, though I am repeating it now decades later. This woman of Haida ancestry ran after me when I was leaving the museum, and said that I must be on the right track since she remembered a Haida name similar to it.

Late one summer night I was reading one of my texts (Knudson & Suzuki, 2006), for my Native Knowledge and Science course when I came upon a wonderful happenstance. *Saya* was in the book, and its origin was from a First Nations community in Canada! Well, who do you tell but a loved one at 2:30 a.m.? I woke my partner, and told him of my incredulous discovery. He glanced at the few pages with the story of the name, and teased me as he fell back to sleep, that

my family couldn't even get *that* right. You see the name *Saya* was that of a hunter who came from the swan people. *He* served as an ancestor to their tribal community. That morning we discussed my prior affinity for swans that had been attributed to a flight of fantasy. In this case, however, my vision, my spirit, my sense of self was based in reality and in a tangible form—a textbook written by respected scientists!

Educators, storytellers from Indigenous communities, and those wanting to engage in memory-work may try to bring back to life particular stories that have been put to sleep, lost from people's memories, or taken from them thru colonization (Errante, 2000). There has been a story in the Canadian news recently about a non-Native writer who used First Nations stories and made them his own. Though this author has received many accolades, tribal communities bristle at the fact that only by their stories being told by an outsider are they honored. This happens also in our own country where scholars in academia have taken the identity of *Indigeneity* as their own. I have read the reports where colleges state that the person's identity was not the reason for them being hired, though it *is* the reason for their notoriety in the field of Indigenous research. I make no claim to an individual identity not my own, and see through a blurred filter the history of my family through those who no longer have a voice.

One can also see it in the retelling of Indigenous stories by others who are separate from their communities, or even in the commodification of their culture, as seen in the fashion industry. Keeping the spirit of the story alive through remembering, retelling, and reconstructing stories is not a straightforward matter. There is a concern about keeping the essential power, the true spirit of a story alive (Holt, 2003). Grounded in oral histories, recollections dear to a community may be transmitted. The spirit and guiding influences are present from their ancestors' ways of conveying knowledge. This is the personal power of historical memories.

Communities are the experts of their own experiences (Haug, 2000). No outsider may lay claim to this, even in a retelling. The method of memory work enables knowledge production that is meant for society. Only when people have the power can they decide on the appropriateness of sharing. I will share stories from my memories founded in my family's histories. When sharing historical narratives of others, they will be named as the source, and not commodified by me.

The very act of remembering is invested with power to see and shape a future (Ballenger, 1997). Memories are a version of self, known through feeling the invoked memory. Oral traditions are the acts of remembering and repeating stories; this then informs Indigenous writings and narratives (Morgan, 2006). For societies with an oral tradition, memory is a space for cultural materials, in the form of stories that tell people who they are and who they have always been.

Memory, as used by Indigenous storytellers, is viewed by referencing existing tales or as a recognizable group of understandings that is common (Ballenger, 1997). Tribal and personal memories merge as the storyteller's memory extends beyond their own lifetime, and their own experiences. Through all of this, memory is never severed from its place or its origins. Memory work includes the process of collecting individual experiences or testimonies based in lived lives (Haug, 2000). The individual's experiences "contain deposits of what has been left behind...elements, both of awakening and resistance" (Haug, p.174). Individual narrations from memories exist at the point when I create them in my texts. The source of the beginning is in my mind, or in how my mind seeks to explain a cause of something in relation to me. Memories serve as a placeholder to remind me of beginnings, and to explain the hows and whys of my travels.

It is important to move beyond the frame that characterizes oral history and traditions by recognizing the multiple influences on memories that produce oral testimony (Morgan, 2006). Life history transcripts may contain contradictions and fragmented accounts since the process of recalling and speaking of the past is, like all history writing, shaped by contemporary concerns and social processes. There may be events and aspects of life which contradict or have played a role in contemporary social situations. Educators may often fail to identify and integrate into their practices diverse modes related to Indigenous contact and ingenuity, and the ways in which tribal culture construct situations of resistance and opposition. Indigenous ways of knowing are not singular, fixed, or constant, but are organic and evolving.

There is a challenge presented by memory as an historical method. It holds implications for the use of historical data generated by memory work (Gardner, 2003). The support of oral history and traditions has been evolving as it contributes to the evidential foundation for historical research. Oral history may be viewed in terms of democratizing the construction of history (Josselson, 1996). The innumerable dealings and experiences of life can be judged, developed, and structured as an ongoing narrative through which meanings and reason may result. One's personal mental archive is a private space. Recognition of this may result in the division of the public from one's identity and of the past from one's comprehension.

Memory creates and preserves identity. It also serves as an observer to the accuracy in history. The lived lives that make up stores memories are propelled by the concerns of maintaining narrative identity, rather than by the defense of historical accuracy (Gardner, 2003). Oral history offers a space for connecting narratives of identity and narratives of history. Oral traditions that describe a society's historical foundation serve to construct a relationship with these experiences to culture, community, and self (Kuhn, 2000). The recall of memories and

notions of identity may be tied to past injustices in storytelling and oral histories as memory is used in the founding of narrative identity (Gardner, 2003.) The ability of memory to enlighten history while sustaining identity is used for oral recollection. Memory is the source of the history of our personal lived lives, while being the avenue that enables a person to observe history's power in shaping our lives.

It may be easier to *other* others when there is no perceived commonality; to marginalize when there is no perceived shared *lived* experience; and to disenfranchise when there is no perceived right to self-determination (Guiffreda, 2016). Researchers have begun to study issues related to older members of Indigenous populations. Oral histories and narratives derived from memories have begun to gain acceptance as an invaluable research tool. Aléx et al. (2006) argued that “from an intersectional perspective, old women’s narratives are important because they show the complexities of being old, Indigenous, and woman”. Despite this determination made through the lens of privilege, it is a viewpoint that is making an assessment that elder women’s narratives have value (Stephens, 2005). Fortunately, there appears to be a greater appreciation of women’s lived experiences due to the influence of social justice on research. When examining the memory recall employed in the narratives of Indigenous Sami women that have a variety of bicultural experiences, it adds to broader perspectives on women’s lived experience which should be honored in societies open to embracing our multicultural world.

Feminist Approaches: Memory Work

Memory work is a process of engagement and deconstruction of memories of activities as seen from both the lens of yesterday and today, as found in the work of June Crawford et al. (1992). My framework and study will use memories founded in the past to be analyzed in the present. Historical experience influences contemporary life as the source of “experiences and

their deposits in the memory” (Haug, 2000, p.156). In the past, only those from a position of power and part of the dominant society were seen as the authorities on histories and stories. My memory work will push against this marginalization and will provide a place for my memories and stories. In memory work, there are breaks between the one who experiences the event, the one who remembers, and the one who articulates. These appear as a role in the passage of time and in the forgetting of elements. Memory work was developed “to approximate that empty space in the dominant theories which should have existed to accommodate women’s experiences” (Haug, p.156). It is a concept that makes way for a method to value and embrace those lived lives without a place for knowledge production apart from the dominant society. The individual is not separate from their multiple identities or their historical experiences related to the self.

As a means to go beyond this in memory work, Jansson and colleagues (2009) employ an explicit feminist technique of analyzing social dealings. Looking at spaces where the narratives of groups, who are marginalized, are silenced, feminism seeks to engage with “life stories from *below*” these arbitrary margins (Kuhn, 2000, p.181). Memory work values the stories narrated by those occupying disenfranchised, hidden places *below* those esteemed by a dominant culture or community. When interacting with others, I strive to count the memory work of others as important and crucial to their social identity. Ascribing feminist ideals makes a place for those previously marginalized by society.

Memory work employs writing and interpreting individual understanding, written in relation to a definite premise. Memory work can reveal and communicate individual understandings as a way to converse and consider those controlled and commodified through gender, race, class, and other intersections of identity (Winker & Degele, 2011). Memory is an

account of past experiences that we place into context for making sense or meaning out of interactions that may produce complex, even contradictory, subject positions, or hybrid or fragmented identities (Lucey & Walkerdine, 2013). You might have a biased view on the life and miseries of poverty, but without perspective on this experience, one should value the memory work of those who have lived that experience. This gives voice to those previously silenced, who are without agency.

Memory work and feminist theory are influenced by the means and stances employed in the women's movement. Feminist theory looks to challenge dominant power structures that seek to exclude members of a society (Pharr, 2007). Though some of this may include embracing conventions and accepted practices of western intellectual thought, it can connect with decolonizing work. It can allow for participation in social transformation that serves and processes agents of change through decolonization. Meaningful conscious commitment to a decolonizing feminist stance requires continued self-examination, as well as continued efforts to give space to those silenced in our society for lack of power or prestige (hooks, 1994).

As in this case of colonization, women's art is often categorized in a *folk* art, division as opposed to *fine* art. Who decided this other than the dominant colonized society prevalent in our communities today? Memory work provides an inclusive space for the valuing of culture that was previously minimized or dismissed (Schwartz, 1999). Memory work is seen as an essentially inclusive and empowering method; it is a way of enabling disenfranchised or marginalized perspectives to have a voice (Rigney, 1999). Memory work allows a place to engage in an inclusive learning space, where the base of original knowledge production and the educational culture may be founded on equality instead of hierarchy.

The influence of memory work is found in the ability to challenge hegemonic traditions employed to view and study societies (Kaufman et al., 2006). It unfolds the potential for personal and collective transformation. Memory work produces theories of socialization pertinent to certain study inquiries. Kaufman and colleagues take the view that a memory can never be recalled exactly as it happened in reality, since we have changed from the person whose understanding fashioned the memory. Memories, as seen in this study, are constructions that rely on who we were, who we are, and who we are becoming (Morgan, 2006). Memory work challenges conventions connected to the production of scientific information. Decolonization brings attention to this information as produced and valued in western intellectual norms and practices (Arvin, et al., 2013). Rigid adherence provides no room for alternative knowledge production to resist information that serves to reinforce colonization. Thus, the process of memory work should be mindful of also resisting a blind adherence to commonplace and western-based assumptions.

Memory work provides the “construction of an identity in resistance” to make way for a decolonized research process (hooks, 1994, p. 46). It creates a disruption amid theory and our lived lives, and validates individual understanding as a valid foundation of data. Everything is open to analysis. Nothing is set as those traits that define us and are seen as integral to our social performance with others. Those traits might indicate how our past has influenced our current active engagement with others (Haug, 1987). The formal differentiation between topic and object is confronted and tested with the use of memory work. Indeed, memory work is only possible if the subject and object of research are one and the same.

Memory work brings awareness to the varied stories one can describe based on the memories assembled from constant moments of lived experiences (Kaufman et al., 2006). The

small numbers of stories we do reveal are inhibited by the prevailing principles of the societies in which we inhabit. Memory work makes the unseen evident while making the common odd. The employment of discrete memories from the spaces of our lives joins subject with object, and connects our lives with theories that may be analyzed and examined with the socializing forces of our lives. Narratives composed of these lived experiences hold potential for rethinking our interactions (Ellis, 1998). Memory work collectives are compilations of a shared community's oral histories and narrative stories that are structured with possible distinctiveness appropriate to multiple identities found in self, the cultural lives and interactions of a society, and in our educational communities.

“Dangers” of Memory Work

The closeness of self and the constant grappling with memory is often fragmented and unpredictable. Autoethnographic work requires a lack of defenses on the part of the researcher to have their studies reach an audience who can engage with and relate in a peripheral way to the research (Jewett, 2008). The closeness of self is a stark contrast to objectifying others. There is no closeness starker than using one's self as both the object of study and the researcher conducting the study. To execute this correctly, an author will face painful realities and exposures (Jenks, 2002; Sparkes, 2002). To let your guard down in order to connect meaningful research is often easier to write about than to face the reality during the process. I have to put on paper, for a segment of academic posterity, my true educational journey and my unvarnished circumstances. It is difficult in part because of the complex interweaving between past, present, and an unknown future.

For example, it is difficult to look back at a picture of myself after coming out the hospital at age one, wearing a beautiful little dress (Figure 5 below). My father is proudly

holding me in the black and white picture, but the shack he stands in front of is a chilling reminder of just how dire our economic circumstances were. My mother took a bus to visit me in the hospital each day during that time, and my father drove there after work to visit me and pick her up. On the first day after my operation, he asked my mother where my clothes were. (I was only dressed in a t-shirt and underpants.) When she explained those were my clothes, the next day my father opened charge accounts all over town, so that we would never be in that situation again. Because of my medical issues and my father's desire that I should be appropriately clothed, I don't think they were ever out of debt throughout my childhood. What a stark and troubling story to relay about one's upbringing.



Figure 2-2. Dad and me.

Memory work can render aspects of a life that might be difficult to negotiate for the researcher (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). How much can one reveal without worrying about the consequences to a person's career or to significant others? I am thankful that my parents, in a way, are no longer here and not able to read my stories. It is a difficult process to situate my stories and be respectful to those in my past, and those in my stories who are no longer here to confront my storytelling, histories, and memories (Ellis, 2007). It is a blessing that it is also filled with the responsibility to use my memory work, my stories, in a useful manner that connects explicitly to my work with others in the community. The memories are mine, but in the spirit of advising in the community, they are laden with co-constructed knowledge and wisdom from diverse and often Indigenous individuals and communities, chaining past, present, and future together in complex ways (Lambert, 2014). Along with Indigenous and feminist components, this autoethnographic study has a third major component, namely culturally competency.

Culturally Competent Advising

Cultural competency, or having the capacity to interact efficaciously with others from various cultures), and inclusion of those previously seen as *less than* has added standing and value to scholarly investigations (Hernández-Avila, 2002). My stories will describe journeys of multiple identities, as well as interactions and intersections with those from a different social and cultural community background than myself. Cultural competency is something to strive toward and is ever changing (Purgason et al., 2016). Though it may be a goal, I will never really *arrive* at true cultural competency, and I will never truly arrive as an advisor. I must constantly be striving and learning.

Indigenous and feminist concepts are interconnected with cultural competence. Feminism promotes equity and equality in relation to others. This is integral to bring best practices to

interactions with those from other communities and social spheres. Familiarity with Indigenous historical knowledge assists in understanding contexts and differences with Native populations. (Vinkle, 2012) Divides between societies need to be acknowledged, realized, and comprehended. Culturally competent advising benefits from linking systemic differences to the advising space to encourage real-world connections. Indigenous and feminist concepts help bridge those differences that led to separateness (Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2008). Cultural competency complemented by Native and feminist perceptions embraces differences to deepen our understanding of our students and our society. These in turn enlighten those opportunities with students in academic advising to promote the wellbeing and positive outcomes for those students.

bell hooks (1994) espouses valuing everyone's presence and contributions as resources for an educational community, an important space for culturally competent advising. In culturally competent advising, there must be a space for access by all students. Academic advisors aid college students with their educational goals and help them to realize their potential. Advisors may assist with students' inquiries into a specific school's program, as well as, help students recognize their intellectual strengths and goals while eventually concentrating on a major (Mitchell & Rosiek, 2005). During this process, academic advisors provide assistance to the faculty within their specific schools or programs, attend new student orientations, and teach the university's introductory course. They collaborate with department faculty, make referrals to faculty or other professionals, and keep current with curriculum and major/minor requirements for supported departments. Responsibilities include students' graduation planning; course planning and petitioning; contacting and meeting with students on academic warning or probation; and following up on academic alerts. Academic advisors also meet with prospective students and provide follow-up to non-registered students. As a professional who serves as an

educational resource to students, the academic advisor provides assistance to at-risk students; gives educational guidance by planning schedules with students; and recommends courses and appropriate solutions for varying student needs.

A student and an advisor can encompass a space where there is a shared exchange of understanding and comprehension (hooks, 1994). This change of perception within an educational space permits the student, as well as the advisor, to be valued. There can be an issue in the advising exchange with students seeing this as a passive experience. This engagement within advising spaces values student empowerment (Kadar, 2001). Students learn that they are their own best advocate throughout their higher education journey, where they can achieve a sense of self-actualization (Guiffrida, 2016). Students have power and are in the position to privilege their own approach to the learning commons. These are places where both transgressive and transformative learning is possible. By acknowledging the social environment in the classroom or advising space, education can be embraced as the practice of freedom and as a way to grant to a student the capacity to be their own agent of change.

Successful advising acknowledges the diversity of the student population. Women are in the majority on college campuses today. More than one third of students are first generation (Strayhorn, 2014). A significant percentage of the undergraduates are from racial and ethnic minorities. Entrance to higher education has now made a space for students from low socioeconomic status, women, veterans, students of color; LGBTQ+ students, and international students. Many students have heritage that may diverge from the current majority or from those readily accepted by the dominant power structure.

To strive for cultural competence in the advising space, advisors must recognize that the student may not be familiar with the cultural systems of college. (McClellan, 2007). Higher

education has a culture that has evolved and made way for a corporatization of education. This atmosphere may be difficult for those used to communities or societies that place worth on cooperation and collaboration versus striving toward individualized goals and ideals.

Some researchers and contributors to advising, like Strayhorn (2014), see culturally competent advisors as a type of cultural navigator. This advisor is familiar with the culture of the students, as well as the culture of the college they serve. Culturally competent advisors steer students through the requirements, codes, and rules that the advisors know from experience (Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2008). They use their expertise to guide and keep students on their academic pathways. These cultural navigators facilitate students' abilities to fit into the requirements of higher education, while they recognize that this shared knowledge belongs to all students regardless of cultural background.

Students from non-majority backgrounds do indeed have needs and requirements separate from their student peers. Advisors can facilitate students' relationships with faculty and members of their cohort (Purgason et al., 2016). The isolation felt by these underrepresented students may be internalized and reinforced by the academic environment with which they are unfamiliar. Culturally competent advisors help bridge these experiences of disenfranchisement to suggest ways to achieve positive outcomes (Rajecki & Lauer, 2007). Advisors must concentrate on effective advising spaces that transcend stereotypes perpetuated on diverse student populations through deliberate choice and efforts. To be culturally competent, an advisor needs to rise above the so-called normative to have inclusive spaces for all students.

As academic advisors, we discuss aspects of the curriculum and general education requirements for completion of an undergraduate degree. Students from underrepresented backgrounds often have issues making the connection between their major fields of interest and

the general education requirements of a university. Some recommend that culturally competent advisors discuss a student's values and proposed academic outcomes to engage students to make connections with a purposeful life beyond higher education (Kirk-Kuwaye & Sano-Franchini, 2015). Though challenging, a culturally competent advisor may encourage students to explore meanings to their lives through engagement with the variety of general education courses that showcase meanings and perspectives in a variety of academic fields and interests. Guiding students in these areas helps serve those from formally marginalized backgrounds.

The structures of higher education in the advising space need to make space for issues that continue to exclude students of color. There needs to be an acknowledgement of the ways that different views of academic advising may have, in the past, sought to exclude instead of include (Kadar, 2001). Students of color have a need for culturally competent advisors who recognize and concede that past approaches have been based within a narrow majority white context (Mitchell et al., 2010). The consequences for students of color in higher education must be addressed and aided within the area of academic advising. Academic advising spaces may be ideal campus spaces to practice social justice within the college community.

As I strive to be a culturally competent advisor within our university, one of the largest challenges can be the diversity among international students. I need to confront these issues while recognizing that the advising space needs to remain one where the individualized needs of a student are addressed (Holder, 2013). There are a variety of demands within the range of academic programs that I serve. I must strive for cultural sensitivity while advising, which takes time and effort to effectively serve the student population.

International students may have a variety of obstacles that impede their academic progress (Charles & Stewart, 1991). Through my memories, I find the spaces that I have sought

to support international students. There are language limitations for international students. When I first came back to graduate school I became a conversational partner. When I read of the need, I consciously said that I was open to engage with students from *any* background, and became conversational partners with a male Saudi student. International students may find adjustment issues when first arriving on campus. I made a concerted effort to reach out to an international student from India, to befriend and assist. At the end of the semester when we met, my son and I helped move her to a new apartment and provided a starter bed and furniture for her accommodations. Cultural competency can come from a developed interest and outreach to others in our academic community.

International students also have concerns apart from others in their academic community due to their unique challenges (Kinoshita & Bowman, 1998; Kirk-Kuwaye & Libarios, 2003). Some international students attempt a full academic course load due to financial sponsorship requirements. They also may have pressure from their families to finish as quickly as possible due to need and family issues. Out-of-state tuition is expensive and is a consideration for many international students. I have international students who are obligated to pursue only the academic programs preapproved by those providing the financial support. These are added academic pressures that require an advisor who is striving to be culturally competent to acknowledge and address (Purgason et al., 2016). These restrictions may encumber a student who has no interest or academic talent with a specific academic pathway. Challenges such as these are not easily addressed without complications and time.

At our university, we recently had a student withdrawal since they were not permitted into the program they wanted due to sponsor restrictions and limitations. Both the international student advisor and myself felt some concern at not being able to assist the student, while

realizing the limitations were beyond those which we could effectively control. Academic advisors with an understanding of cultural issues, such as these try to establish strong, effective relationships with international college students whenever possible, though the outcome, as we found out, is never assured (Zhang, 2016).

Advisors in our culturally diverse society need to embrace and value students from a variety of backgrounds to help assure student success in higher education. The worth of all students can encompass a variety of student identities in the pursuit of culturally competent advising (Holder, 2013). I hold to the precepts taught to me in my cultural competency training sessions that this goal is a work in progress. Advisors need the interest and the skills necessary to advocate for students from a variety of cultural groups and viewpoints (McClellan, 2007). Regardless of standpoints and heritage, it is the responsibility of the academic advisor in higher education to make a safe and effective space for all students to accomplish academic and hopefully personal success.

Academic advisors work within departments and majors to guide students in their academic journey to make course plans and decisions to achieve their scholarly goals. Effective advising corresponds with effective teaching. Elements include encouraging problem-solving and decision-making. Advisors teach students about the university to foster knowledge and increase adaptive outcomes (Leach & Patall, 2016). Undergraduate advisors are often thought to relay top-down instructions to students, as I have seen employment descriptions desiring applicants with strong insistence skills. These insistence advising skills use intentional structures for a student's adherence to an academic plan. I am fortunate to work in an environment that empowers academic advisors to approach their positions that best serve the student, *their* department, *our* department, and the advisor. Having the freedom to change your approach per

the needs of the student can be challenging, but is supported by teamwork with other advisors. A work-life balance is also valued in my place of employment, so in many respects, I am quite fortunate.

It is a challenge to examine advising as both a place for scholarship, as well as for learning. That is because in higher education, one strives to fill both of these roles as they enhance the abilities of the advisor and add to the personal and the professional identities of the advisor engaged in scholarship (Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2008). Advisors have many roles and aspects within their positions dependent upon the defined roles and expectations placed upon them. Though there are many communities of learning that can be reliant on an advisor, it is important to strive for increased expertise in scholarship as part of the academic advising experience (Kirk-Kuwaye & Libarios, 2003). Advising can be an intellectual task beyond the normal professional expectations. Professional development that includes scholarship is to be encouraged as advisors serve as a guide in the path toward achievement in higher education. Having the opportunity to engage in research, attending learning opportunities, and acquiring additional skills are valuable components to provide a space for scholarship within advising (Longwell-Grice et al., 2016). Some research tends to favor finding advisors only within a specific community, to serve students successfully from that social grouping.

There are proponents of the stance that true cultural competency cannot be achieved by people outside of underserved communities, unless they spend time with them while becoming a student themselves to embody the conversations and discussions integral to those spaces (Mitchell & Rosiek, 2005). From this stance, the researchers conclude that most desired advisor for a student from an ethnic group would be an advisor from that origin. Even more desired, from this perspective, would be a specific advisor from the social community of the student's

upbringing. They should share not only ethnicity, but common space with these students. These researchers do, reluctantly, acknowledge that not everyone growing up within a social/ethnic community has invested themselves in their culture. They form the stance that there is learning that can only be obtained by having been a member of that community. Can one truly know and aid other members of that society? This conclusion is problematic at best.

Mitchell and Rosiek (2005) continue by discussing two approaches to academic advising: prescriptive advising and developmental advising. The authors describe prescriptive advising as having a narrow focus on academic status; it uses a top-down teaching style and presumes sole responsibility for a student's academic success. However, there are many components of advising including exploratory approaches, as well as an integration of prescriptive and developmental approaches. The authors see developmental advising as encompassing all of a student's lived experiences. The developmental point of reference in advising is the goal they advocate.

As someone who has had many cultural competency courses and experiences within Indigenous communities, the main point that has resonated with me for many years now was an instructor once stating that cultural competence is an evolution, an unfolding. That we will never "pass" the cultural competence test or have a piece of paper saying we have achieved cultural competency. He was a proponent for cultural competency as organic, where one should continue to be engaged within the social context and spaces we wished to occupy. Interest must lead to action and active engagement with those communities we wished to serve (Warner, 2008). There are Indigenous beliefs, customs, cultures, and ways of knowing that might connect to education and advising. I am fortunate to have an academic advising position where I can further explore those connections as I conduct this research.

Indigenous Beliefs and Connections to Advising

I do not want to imply that there is a pan-Indian approach that I am seeking in my academic advising perspective. There is no specific identity tied to Indigenous beliefs that would be universal for all Native students or integral to their communities. I seek to incorporate the Native respect for the whole person and their place in the world, even as I work in a small microcosm of the world of higher education. A holistic approach can be mindful of Indigenous perspectives (Kadar, 2001; McClellan, 2007; Rajecki & Lauer, 2007). Just as some academic spaces are exclusive versus inclusive, so are some Native nations' beliefs. By being employed in the Pacific Northwest, I am reminded of an Indigenous nation in this area that perpetuates exclusivity as much as an Ivy League school might. I know that part of this exclusivity is the result of losing their place and heritage due to Western invaders and influences. I grapple with knowing that to be in Indigenous spaces, I must honor their choices. Respect for cultural practices presented by a student is important to their academic journey and should be part of the advising spaces (Bartlett, 2005).

Indigenous students, as well as other minority students, have many of the same needs as any student in higher education. Learning communities should strive to support and encourage Native students to hold fast to their unique backgrounds as a way to face dominant spaces established by authorities in higher education (Rigney, 1999). Indigenous students may hold to their identities and beliefs from their cultural communities, while others may not have that same experience, or feel in a position to privilege their beliefs in an advising space.

Native students, as well as other students traditionally marginalized in higher education, may experience changes and challenges to their identities as they continue on their educational journeys (Bartlett, 2007). Indigenous students may also be instilled with

a sense of cultural community taking precedence over their own academic and personal achievements (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Where there is little emphasis or value given to relating to others in our country, per the authors, constructs of self and interdependence are emphasized in Indigenous beliefs, and also in many cultures around our world. There may be pressure from their background to stay grounded in their culture to the exclusion of embracing anything perceived as part of the dominant culture. These factors should be considered when assisting students in academic advising.

Students from a homogenous background may be categorized as being from highly relational groups. Some scholars have labeled those engaged or from these social or ethnic upbringings as students who are part of a *high relational group* (Kirk-Kuwaye & Libarios, 2003). High relational groups are defined not just by ethnicity. Indigenous students coming from communities that were small or isolated might be the circumstances of some tribal nations. The students may embrace their culture and social communities as an integral part of their lives and identities (Leach & Patall, 2016). As students from high relational groups enter higher education, many efforts have been made to provide programs to embrace and encourage them in supportive learning communities within the university setting. Students in these minority groups should have the chance to work together in mutual and supportive learning communities that may also be emulated in advising spaces.

Facets of Academic Advising

Advising should strive to have a learning space for students to embrace their identities and integrate the students' cultural commons when appropriate and when acknowledged by the student as integral to their needs (Bartlett, 2005). These commons are systems of intellectual support that a student may or may not have access

to. Some students may acknowledge their learning community within an advising space, where others may speak of it tangentially, or not at all. There are power and privilege dynamics which may play a part in situating the advising experience for the student (Longwell-Grice, et al., 2016). Some Indigenous students may have access to communities that have an intellectual commons or they may have other tangible support, such as scholarships. Other students I might meet may be from a tribal nation that has limited supports, financial and otherwise. Some tribal nations have libraries and access to historical tribal records. Others may be only able to assist community members with the hard daily struggles that come as part of their social group. Identity work may be an integral part of a Native educational learning community, and it can be up to the student to reveal what they want to bring to the advising meeting from this foundation (Bartlett, 2007).

Looking at culture as part of the advising commons, research on multicultural approaches has leaned toward the developmental. I see an advising commons as a space for the exchange of ideas through teamwork, empowerment, and recognition. For example, Brown and Rivas (1994) proposed using prescriptive advising, as well as developmental advising when working with students who expect a culturally-based and hierarchal approach.

For Japanese international students, Kinoshita and Bowman (1998) are proponents of an authoritarian stance in relation to the students' cultural background. At my current university, I have many Japanese international students. International students are often drawn to the technology degrees offered in the schools I support. I do not follow this pat advice, but take my lead from my students. As bell hooks (1994) comments, being a member of a certain group does

not make you the representative of said group, nor should it be expected that the student represents all from a common background.

Cornett-DeVito and Reeves (1999) advocate the integration of prescriptive and developmental advising as the basis of an intercultural common ground. There are studies that indicate the importance of cultural approaches for minority students. Some of these practices and considerations may be of assistance when considering the social and learning communities for every student that engages in the advising experience (Kirk-Kuwaye & Libarios, 2003). There are cultural concerns and power dynamics that may influence the advising experience, not just for those underserved students, but perhaps for the student population as a whole. The advisor may be aware of a student's unique background, though that is not the sum total of the student and their experiences in both education and their lives (Rajecki & Lauer, 2007). As an advisor I feel I must provide a space for the whole student, and not just a specific aspect of the student.

Advising located in Indigenous cultural spaces may make room for memory work. Postcolonial theory can support Indigenous approaches to advising (Hale, 2012). Postcolonial theory seeks to move beyond dominant power structures developed from prior patriarchal systems for movement toward more inclusive spaces for those previously at the margins of society (Lefebvre & Thomas, 2017). Furthermore, theories of ambivalence recognize that there are conflicting feelings or thoughts that may come into play in postcolonial spaces, and must be acknowledged as they contain both the positive and the negative.

Memory work is a method that takes the researcher to their own narrative texts as a means for writing stories similar to the many ways of knowing embraced by Indigenous cultures, through storytelling and oral history (Schwartz, 1999). Memory

work can also take a place in feminism as transgressive and transformative (Mars, 2008). I can recall, to an extent, what brought me to this position at this time in my life, as I may ask a student to do the same as they struggle within the confines of academia. I query about what brought them here; why did they decide on this university; what influenced their initial choices; and do those influences still matter? I can share my stories to establish a rapport with them. That is certainly important in academic advising.

Indigenous-informed Advising and Feminism

Just as Native peoples have endured many encounters of struggle and resistance, feminists have also fought through the privilege and power of the dominant culture (Hale, 2012). Dominant systems of power and privilege have, in the past, come from a patriarchal viewpoint. It was often hard for my students to understand that even in our country, women did not have the right to vote until those in power, men, were willing to share in the privilege of voting. Sadder still was the revelation that the Indigenous female elders that I met did not have the right to vote until the mid-1960s. Though one segment of women in our country were able to vote since 1920, others, due to their ethnicity, were denied that right and privilege until more than forty years later, and as we all know, voter suppression is still ongoing.

Feminism often seeks to use gender as a tool to analyze personal experience in relation to the current society. The focus of feminism advocates for those marginalized in our society (Behar, 1996). The feminist approach has only recently focused on elder women (Lipscomb & Rich, 2006). Interestingly, this new focus on age is only now being explored as many of the

feminists from the 1960s and 1970s are aging themselves. Recently, I saw this phenomenon surface in a female student who was in the process of coming to my current university in order to stay in her current position. She has been told that although she has done her job for many years, in order to justify keeping her in that position, she must complete an undergraduate degree. She apologized when she called, explaining that she knows she will be well into her late 60s upon completion. I reassured her that I was also an older student, and was able to give her positive feedback. When I asked a colleague for a consultation regarding her transfer credits, I was met with incredulity. The colleague said that she should be preparing for retirement, not looking for a way to continue her current employment. I calmly stated that I am such a woman also, working on a degree, and desiring to continue in my chosen profession. It was all very helpful advice and assistance from then on.

Unfortunately, the trend of the women's movement is more focused on the oppression of women, and not on differences of age, ethnicity, or sexual preference (Lorde et al., 1990). I go back to Lorde in that her views are just as pertinent today. I see it when I read about feminism and social justice today. There can be an elitist attitude in discussions on social justice. Just because one might not have the background or education to know the theories being used by scholars, does not mean that they do not have a contribution to make to this conversation (Tierney, 1998). The plight of women and their lack of power to change their circumstances should have motivated feminists to begin theorizing and promoting activism for older women in the earliest feminist movement, commonly referred to as the first-wave movement, which started in Seneca Falls, New York in the mid-19th century.

When I was a member of the National Women's Studies Association, and was a part of their aging caucus, there were very few members. Whenever there were presentations made by

members of this committee, they were sparsely attended. I will say also that when I was involved in this association, there appeared to be little interest in themes of Indigenous concern or of STEM. There was a Sami woman that attended one year (I recognized this from her cultural garb), and approached her after attending one session of the convention (Alex et al., 2006). She said that I was only the second person who had approached her there, and she did not realize that she would travel so far from her home to feel so alone.

There is an antecedent to feminism's first wave movement that occurred with the women of the *Haudenosaunee* (Iroquois) *Confederacy* (Wagner, 2001). The early women's activists of the mid-19th century viewed these Indigenous women, who had equal, but separate status with males in their Native community, with a certain awe and envy. Unfortunately, it was not enough to actually result in a change for Native peoples, but it was an impetus for a change in the status of the women whose origin was tied to the European colonizers.

This research will explore how engagement in traditional cultural practices has provided support and resiliency to the lives of the elder Native women participants in ways that are used in my journey because resiliency is also important to the academic advisor and to the students (Arvin et al., 2013). Tribal groups are often invested in the integration of and respect for elders, so that they may impart their storytelling talents, narrative skills, and oral histories about ancestral occurrences to the young in the promotion of cultural awareness (Yellow Horse Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). This is an important technique to assist in relating educational issues to the elder women of Indigenous heritage, as well as imparting knowledge to the next generations in the advising space. A common link between Indigenous and feminist methodologies is that of "lived experiences" (Rigney, 1999, p. 117). The struggle against oppression is a major consideration when searching for and examining collective structures to ascertain if they are

positioned to preserve or oppress. Specifically, the integration of storytelling – the continuance of oral histories to subsequent generations – is emancipatory.

Elder Indigenous women's daily lives illustrate Pharr's (2007) call for living with communal values. Interconnections and interdependence are the foundation of tribal attachments. The very history and nature of Native heritage may create a "community [required to see] the whole, not just the parts, and [understand] how they interrelate" (Pharr, 2007, p.730). Pharr also addressed the glorification of individualism seen throughout our country. Elder Native participants may model stability regarding self and sovereignty on the one hand, and the communal well-being and civic duty on the other.

Interconnectedness and interdependence can inform academic advising. I seek to promote this in my interaction with not only my students, but also with faculty in the departments I serve. When a member of the faculty approached me with concerns regards they had a group of students that had great difficulty in a prior term, I was happy to lend a hand. Members of the faculty had a suggestion for additional outreach. When meeting with these students, I learned that they all had difficulty with one specific course. Since I knew they were all going to retake the course during the coming fall, I investigated ways that I might be of assistance. I looked into resources available in our bookstore and library. I networked to see what assistance other engineers had used for such a course, and consulted with faculty on those results. This certainly speaks to approaching these students in a communal respect. The faculty had a concern for the group, and I was able to act and assist in a variety of ways. The well-being of these students was the priority, and assisting the faculty was an added bonus.

Feminist scholars must broaden the scope of interest to be more inclusive of intellectual pursuits that affect the elderly and those of Indigenous origins globally (Arvin, et al., 2013). A

significant name in the field of feminist studies is McIntosh (2005); she has commented on a need for a gendered perspective on education for citizens of our world. McIntosh asserts that a global sense of belonging can be developed locally by educators who bring their emotions and talents into the classroom to help students cultivate their own capacities and acquire “wide-ranging awareness” that is important for the future development of the students.

This inclusivity would make space for scholars such as Tuhiwai-Smith (2005), as she discusses intergenerational knowledge which is passed along and added to as each generation introduces its own improvements and modifications. I have met with students receiving scholarships from their countries or their tribal nations. They have an appreciation that they are being afforded an opportunity that prior generations had not experienced. They speak of the responsibility that this assistance comes with. They give deference to those who chose them and the requirements needed to continue their scholarly pursuits. The respect for these honored ways of knowing helps to decolonize education. Learning from prior generations can be expanded into learning. Cultural concepts and traditions can be incorporated into multiform approaches to academic advising.

Indigenous and Cultural Approaches to Advising

In prior years when I had the opportunity to work with elder Native women and learn about their educational experiences, I began to ponder the cultural and social influences on learning (Mann, 2000). There appeared to be an emphasis beyond the self to the consideration of a community and others. This resonated with me as someone who was raised in a neighborhood with varied backgrounds and points of view. The common denominator of poverty at times drew people together, but also could be a point of contention when trying to change one’s circumstances. Being in an academic advising

position in the Pacific Northwest, I have many students from differing cultural backgrounds that include Indigenous ancestry and international students. A dear friend reminded me that although from an outsider's view, there may be a sense of interdependence within, but that isn't always the reality for the Indigenous community members (Morgan, 2006). I keep these thoughts in mind when considering the cultural and Indigenous approaches that may influence advising.

My current university campus has many international students from Asia. We even have a Japanese garden where the university community may visit, observe, and relax. With this in mind, I have reviewed some studies that have looked at the educational experiences of a group of Asian and Pacific Islander students as they make use of academic advising (Henning et al., 2012). One study showed that although the students said they were going to take advantage of available advising services, they did not follow up with their intentions. The study found no significance in academic outcome when the students did make use of available advising opportunities. Since the Asian students did academically better than the Pacific Islanders, the researchers concluded that the use of academic advising services should be perpetuated by students' cultural communities, even though those communities may have challenges that supersede such a change. This framing was odd to me in that the researchers appeared to have a bias toward mainland students with their academic achievements and their use of advising. Until I read this study, I would not have thought that academic differences could be reduced to a handful of factors.

For students that I meet, just being away from the support of family and community may take its toll. This may be even more pronounced when there are language and writing

barriers. This study also advocated for academic advisors from the same cultural community, while acknowledging that the very factors that impact negative academic performance might influence the number of available and qualified academic advisors (Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2008). Trying new and unique approaches to encourage students to make use of academic advising services may have to be adjusted to the needs of students from various minority cultural backgrounds to encourage positive academic achievement. This may be done while providing an inclusive and encouraging atmosphere for all students.

When one hails from a family and community of multiple identities, it can both be both an issue and an asset when advising students in higher education. There is the push-pull of competing stances within, while meeting the challenges of assumptions that are made from without. Students may meet me and make a judgment about who I am and what I am all about; that takes time to change. Some have even remarked about my accessibility and affableness. I would have thought that these were traits that one would assume an academic advisor would possess (Kadar, 2001; McClellan, 2007). If I was not approachable, or if I did not strive to have a pleasant encounter when first meeting students, how would I be able to do a competent job for all involved? I know too well how providing an inclusive space is preferable to an exclusive one. My background sensitized me to the contradictory ways in which I may be viewed. It also provided me with internal social and cultural resources to draw upon when working with students, faculty, and university administration and staff on a variety of issues pertinent to the success and welfare of our students.

Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in higher education benefit from considering respectful and critical leaning processes (Kovach, 2009). This perspective may allow for a space to discuss the spiritual sense of self within relationships and identity. This may put into practice more transformative conversations. Though there might be resistance to advising from this perspective, it permits a space for the historical to be integrated with the formal (Nora, 1989). It takes us beyond the normative process of considering the Indigenous in light of the colonists' or settlers' interactions, to actually how Indigenous perspectives and knowledge can be integrated into advising practices. Social justice can be modeled in this place of peace instead of domination where issues might not be neatly resolved, but ideas and views respected.

While conducting academic advising, there may be a discomfort that can take place where circumstances are acknowledged through intellectual reflections and thought. These encounters may be filled with tentativeness and unease that marginalized students inhabit when coming from differing social backgrounds. Students entering higher education from a Native cultural background may experience what noted African-American feminist scholar Patricia Hill Collins (1991) describes as being an outsider within an established institutional dominant culture. The perspective of a student from an underrepresented background will differ than those coming from a privileged group, whether due to class, ethnic heritage, or other individualized factors (Winker & Degele, 2011). The outsiders may feel the stark differences apparent in this academic climate that are not apparent to those within the dominant culture. Hill Collins sees advantages to this perspective and the positive potential to embrace one's prior history as an important foundation for learning.

Mitchell and Rosiek (2005) take the stance that Hill Collins' scholarly examination may also be applicable in academic advising spaces. They are proponents of seeking advisors in these spaces that share the same heritage as their students from marginalized backgrounds. Though this might be an aspired researcher-recommended ideal, it is not always possible to have advisors that share a recognizable community history with their students. Advisors through interest, knowledge acquisition, and training can provide an advising space that is respectful to students (Warner, 2008). Although advisors may not share cultural heritage with students in higher education, they can ensure that a student has an environment where they have their needs being addressed. It is important to understand and trust the points made by Hill Collins that one's cultural origins can provide information for disenfranchised students to rely on as they enter their studies. This is knowledge that has been gained over time by struggles with and coercions by dominant institutions and those who perpetuate the status quo.

Research on academic advising by Mitchell and Rosiek (2005) continues by establishing a parallel between the knowledge formations of an instructor with the information acquired by an academic advisor. Academic advisors change, modify, and innovate as needed for individual student interactions. Material covered during advising meetings are in response to the student's shifting requirements, and suit the commitment to serve the student.

Although there is an emphasis on knowledge formation on behalf of the advisor, Mitchell and Rosiek (2005) continue to stress that there should be urgency in placing those who share the cultural background together in academic advising. Cultural competency, in this view, does not necessarily come from a shared background, and may be acquired in an integrated manner from those outside of the students' social and cultural histories (McClellan, 2007). Being able to

convey meaningful information to an advisee also requires the advisor to develop an interest in a variety of backgrounds and histories to provide an inclusive environment.

Approaches to advising for Indigenous students in higher education are similar to the concerns an advisor would have for other students from underserved populations. The advisor should seek to learn some of the foundational histories of minority cultures, as well as obtain a responsive outlook to the dynamic explained by Hill Collins (1991) regarding an outsider perspective in an institution of higher learning. The acquisition of such learning may be in the favor of those sharing the same cultural upbringing. However, I do not share Mitchell and Rosiek's (2005) stance that those from similar backgrounds are always more competent advisors than those who do not have a shared history with their students. Though the authors do qualify their perspective by saying that through dedication and intensive study, a similar, though secondary, competency may be provided by those lacking a shared culture. I believe that having an engaged, knowledgeable, educated, and motivated academic advisor is an asset to students in higher education (Rajecki & Lauer, 2007). Not everyone is able to have, or desires to have, an advisor from a similar background. I agree with a fellow advisor who said we were fortunate in that we prepared for our current positions, and truly wanted to be there. He added that our students were also fortunate in that they had advisors who were motivated to learn and assist them in any way possible.

Though they would prefer academic advisors to have similar backgrounds to their advisees, Mitchell and Rosiek (2005) subscribe to the perspective that scholarly ways of knowing, specifically narrative approaches, may help to bridge the gap between academic advisors of similar background to students to those who do not have a shared history with their students. A narrative approach is founded through inquiry, theory, experience, stories acquired

through conversations, and reflection (Gardner, 2003). The response of Mitchell and Rosiek is to encourage the use of investigations in the form of narratives of advising experiences.

Investigations include the lived experiences of those involved in a study, and the stories they have to convey. Different discourses on cultural differences in the advising experience may be needed to convey these experiences for research purposes. This would include outsiders to a community or culture that may obtain the necessary insight and skills through interest and hard work with societies that may have been disenfranchised from higher education.

A narrative approach to research in academic advising can showcase the complex identities, forces at work, and uncertainty that are present in advising. Insights gained through the narrative texts of advisors can provide a shift from thinking in broad terms about advising to an awareness of individual student-advisor interactions (Kadar, 2001). Using a narrative discourse may highlight the lived experience of a dynamic advisee-advisor meeting as well. The aptitude and capabilities of an advisor may take place in the narratives of advisors.

There are a variety of concerns that may be crucial in the advising space with Indigenous students in higher education. Some students may come from close tribal communities, though most Native students receive their prior education in non-Native community settings. There may be encouragement to consider students' position from their cultural upbringing as they enter and begin to form new social interactions as students in this distinct setting (Bartlett, 2005). Plans of action, conceived with the students' unique backgrounds in mind, may aid in the transition to post-secondary education. Often outreach is made in higher education to students of Indigenous heritage through campus organizations, departments that teach subjects related to Native history and identity, as well as encouraging invited speakers to discuss topics related to Indigenous

traditions and culture. An academic advisor may post such information in their office space or mention these items to students during scheduled meetings.

I have had students causally mention their cultural background due to scholarship availability or the distance of their homes from campus. Thus far, there has been little indication of interest in, or the necessity for, additional referrals related to my students' backgrounds. Though not indicated, referrals might be for cultural resources, educational opportunities, and scholarships; they may aid a targeted, underserved group. Because of concerns with Indigenous learners within higher education, I have available easy-to-use references showing prospective services and supports pertinent to Native students.

As the focal participant and subject of study, autoethnographers weave into their narratives their lived experiences for examination (Freeman, 2015). This method allows autoethnography to be used as an instrument, bringing awareness about the certainty and value of the places where interactions take place. It transcends the study by allowing for a removal from the assumed binary that takes place in the ethnography of the researcher and subject. In the works of Ellis, Foucault, and Behar, one can see that autoethnography's role may be used as a means to manage self-centeredness by this disclosure.

In this same manner, resistance to a singular or homogenous approach to both research and advising is advocated by a variety of sources embracing culturally competency. (Holder, 2013; Cornett-DeVito & Reeves, 1999) Lived experience inhabits study while making a place to welcome a range, a multiplicity of paths culturally and socially different from our own.

This may also be used as a practical means to place inspirations and aspirations open for examination that additional approaches assume and obscure, important for constructing community. All memory is an act of creation from our thoughts; writing with authenticity is vital

to autoethnographic content. Memory serves as the foundation of the stories and histories I will use in my study.

Conclusion

I sought a framework that would integrate Indigenous, feminist, and culturally competent knowledge related to advising to support this inquiry. I know that my individual perspective is the start of this study and will not be the endpoint. My memory stories will involve a variety of contexts and observations in the autoethnographic process. I will employ data sources such as journals; historical narratives of Native women's educational encounters; my experiences as an advisor; as well as material culture and scholarly works found in this discovery of myself in relation to others through my autoethnographic journey. I explain and explore all of these in more detail in Chapter 3 on Methodology. Also, I explore and explain my precise interpretation and method of autoethnography in light of Indigenous oral histories, storytelling, and memories, along with the feminist frame of memory work.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Writing is a process to reveal yourself while confronting your fears. I chose autoethnography as the qualitative research method to explore and disclose my research journey (Allen & Piercy, 2005; Bochner & Ellis, 2016). Taking a subjective stance on identity based on age, socio-economic status, ableism, ethnicity, and gender, my research methodology is designed to explore:

- How might the complex, shifting, and sometimes fluid intersections of my identities influence the formation of decolonizing advisory relations in my role of academic advisor at a small, culturally diverse university in the western United States?
- How might autoethnographic memory work support understanding the roles of my identities in these relations?

Cultural competency is an ability to interact, in a positive manner, with those from differing communities, customs, and cultures. It is a goal that is never fully achieved. It is something to aspire to, but may never be truly realized even though I am committed. I will strive toward a non-western approach that acknowledges alternative histories and alternative knowledge (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). I looked for ways to accomplish this by making choices that challenge the dominant, privileged approaches perpetuated by conventional or western ways of knowing. In so doing, I recognized that there are other voices that have been marginalized historically, who have had little say in even their own stories. My methods unfolded and emerged through self-reflection and examination.

Methodological Approach

Qualitative methodology was well-suited to my study. This method was exploratory in nature and permitted an examination of social behavior on a small scale. It permitted interpretation or meaning-making through the observation of moments in my life (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). As the researcher, I was able to give interpretation in context from my perception and analysis (Brown & Strega, 2005). Since the scope of my inquiry was narrow in focus, qualitative methodology served as the center of my research. Qualitative methodology is probing, as well as tentative, while allowing research on social behavior on a small measure. This permitted moments in my life (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Chang, et al., 2012) to be assigned meaning through my transfer of significance through interpretation in context from my judgment and analysis.

Method

Autoethnography framed my research exploration. It permitted me to be both the researcher and the researched: the object of study and the observer. It allowed my study to connect with my personal experiences while searching for meaning in a broader context. Fine (1994) in her essay *Working the Hyphens* argued for the power of narratives written against othering. Othering is categorizing people by a narrow definition that seeks to see them as less than those in a dominant society. By using autoethnography, I pursued research where my stories—infused with issues of class, gender, ethnicity, and ability – remarked on my “otherhood,” my place in these marginalized spaces. I placed myself within my own social science research analyzing my location and space within these spheres. I found that transformative learning taking place during the course of my study while I created a space for representation and location, as mentioned by hooks (1990). Autoethnography, as a method

employed during my research, allowed it to be open to the many possibilities in my limited perspective and viewed my place in a social sphere (Pickering & Guzik, 2008).

By using autoethnography to look more carefully at my non-Native student and advisor lives, I sought to understand the roles of memory and fluid, multiple, and intersectional identities. These identities included ethnicity, age, and gender, in forging genuine connections with others through a complex perspective informed by Indigenous cultural and historical knowledge. By reflecting on these memories embedded in the narratives that I prepared, I created a “history of the present” (Foucault, 1982) that still is continually being created, informing my present life, in a new place. A new opportunity as an academic advisor with a university in the Pacific Northwest occurred somewhat serendipitously as I was planning my dissertation research. My move to the Northwest represents a rupture in life as I know it, but a new episteme from which to look back and grow in my self-understandings and work as an advisor.

Autoethnography “is part auto or self, and part ethno or culture. It is also something different from both of them, greater than its parts” (Ellis, 2004, p. 32). The whole is transcended beyond hierarchy. Ranking, place in society, or the position I hold was only a part of the research. I saw something greater than myself playing out in my own work, something slightly beyond collective categories, or themes in my data. I eschewed conventional ways of knowing as I looked at identity classifications like ethnicity, class, and gender, and something more. I used autoethnography to bring a focus to oral traditions and storytelling (Ellis, 2009; Ellis & Bochner, 2006; Freeman, 2015). Through this study I found connections within and to our social world. I found spaces where lived lives intersect. My study showed, during brief intervals, lives leading to intersections between me and elder women of Indigenous heritage

who had inspired me during key moments of the past and helped to inform my advising practices.

The *Haudenosaunee* (Iroquoian) people would use a wampum belt to illustrate separate, parallel lives being led, never intersecting with each other (Neighbors of the Onondaga Nation, 2016). They had hoped to live in peace separate from outsiders and in harmony with them. Iroquoian women (*gantowisas*) were central to these types of treaty agreements that had a place in their own right during the establishment of accords (Mann, 2000). Since predominately males would be away from the established tribal community hunting game, women had a separate, but equal role in their communities as keepers of their homes and families, and sought accord with outsiders. Due to historical circumstances that forever changed their lives, intersection with others was forced upon them violently. I am fortunate to be part of a willing intersection between myself and some elder women of Native American ancestry who had a place in informing this research.

Autoethnography is a useful technique for addressing the problematic practice of research being seen as unbiased and objective, requiring disconnection of the researcher from the subject (Ellis & Bochner, 2006). In reality as I perceive it, there is no single objective worldview. I desired to use an approach that brought forward an Indigenous voice--knowledge, as well as experience (Smith, 2005). By situating my work in this manner, I used my personal experience in a culture that investigated my interactions with those of Native heritage and explored how memory, both historical and personal, informed my knowledge of becoming an advisor (Ellis, 2004). Thus, I was both knower and known in this research as one who learns, and also as one who is the object of study—myself.

Autoethnography is an approach to explain cultural knowledge from the perspective of the individual insider/outsider (Ellis et al., 2011). I wanted to both honor the nature of reciprocity in relationships and research while acknowledging bias. A principal outcome of my study is in the connection between me, the reader, and this written text. My intent was to depict my own lived experiences of events, in a framework assembled by myself, as a model that resonated with the subjective nature of knowledge. I sought to reach a place “outside of myself” (Jenks, 2002, p.174), to craft an autoethnographic tale of culture historically placed in our current society through my writing, and all of those who engage with it now and in the future (Pinar et al., 2008).

As I searched for meaning-making, autoethnography was implemented as a way to use my personal struggles and exposure to articulate my study. This difficult, highly personal qualitative method objectified me, as opposed to the elder women of Indigenous heritage I met, and opposed to other individuals and groups I engaged with through my memories. As the subject of my study, I existed in the written form for me to be analyzed and viewed, in part, as a subject, as opposed to a whole person. There was a disquietude and fretfulness in this approach (Wall, 2008).

Personal narratives lent themselves to questions of objectivity, as well as frightening and limiting intimacy never before explored. I considered autoethnography with much examination and dread. It was one thing to be exposed to possible criticism due to one’s research without the added weight of lived, dear experiences being open to such analysis. Memories may be called into question on this personal level, but are seldom open for debate when an ethnographer is recording others’ memories in their fieldwork (Coffey, 1999). My research was a quest to find

connections and commonalities through these lived experiences; these personal narrations were laid open through autoethnography (Poulos, 2016).

Researchers follow a guide via their conceptual framework. By employing an Indigenous paradigm, my methodological approach and perception of reality informed my reality through autoethnography (Lambert, 2014). Using an Indigenous paradigm meant that a framework beyond the educational was used in a supportive and respectful manner (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). In the context of my study, the Indigenous paradigm respected that there are many ways to approach research, and the need to reveal acknowledged that neutrality gives way to subjectivity. This world view is integral to the research in that it values relationship and the knowledge gained through such structures (AIRA, 2016). The connections and associated bonds were recognized, respected, and valued within a specific space, acknowledging the place where these personal exchanges had happened. The personal story or stories were no longer separated by teller and observer, but embraced through these valued relationships. By being self-reflective, I claimed a symbolic space that transcended prevailing structures of power and representation (Tierney, 1998).

Indigenous research paradigms were valued along with accepted institutional practices as an alternative way of knowing, as a space being made for the voices of those previously marginalized within accepted frameworks (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Though resistance against conformity may be discouraged, I used autoethnography to resist exclusion, to challenge these limits. Storytelling was the foundation of my autoethnography. Telling stories is the really wonderful thing about being a human being. Indigenous ways of knowing rely on storytelling and oral histories. The idea of telling stories to decolonize research through autoethnography

situates oneself both in a current and historical context while looking inward and outward; this process was foundational to my research.

Although this project is on file with the West Virginia University Institutional Review Board (IRB), autoethnography is deemed non-human subjects research, and thus a formal review was not required.

Memory work and Autoethnography

Where the indigenous paradigm includes storytelling founded in cultural histories and social memories, my autoethnographic study also included memory work. As an inclusion of a feminist grounded method, memory work looks to events from the past for relationships in the present (Clare & Johnson, 2000; Giorgio, 2013; Grima, 2008). Social and cultural identity is often placed in the context of dominant power relationships within our society. Memory work allows for a place for an individual's present and past journey to serve as avenues for meaning making. Memory work may bring in from the margins those voices that may traditionally have been silenced. It allows for women's voices to be valued, recognized, and embraced. It allows for these moments "to participate in the analysis of the cultural formation of the self" (Clare & Johnson, 2000, p. 206.) The use of memory work with autoethnography truly permitted the personal to inhabit the history and the happenings of the individual.

The method of memory work originally was a cooperative means for understanding society, developed by an assemblage of women, and based on the work of German sociologist Frigga Haug (1987). This method investigates and theorizes the process by which a person creates their self in social and power relations (Haug, 1987). However, in this dissertation project, I conceived memory work as more of an individual project in line with autoethnography. I engaged my memories informally with other women through the research process in order to

provide a sort of “sounding board” during my analysis. Memory work has as its foundation the premise of society as recognized by those in the lived practices of social interaction. The conjecture is that as a group seeks to relate and examine experiences in a cooperative endeavor, they have a means to create an original and rewarding study. Haug (2000) discussed this in relation to women’s anxiety, with a group effort used for the analysis of memory texts. She makes the distinction that the analysis is centered on *constructs* made by the writer, and not on the individual self. This work allows for stories that may have been previously discounted or ignored to be valued.

Autoethnography goes beyond autobiography and ethnography where a researcher may be positioned within the community and interacts within it (Holman Jones, 2005; Jenks, 2002; Jewett, 2008). The autoethnographer is not the observer of subjects, but a person interacting *with others* who ethnographers may consider “others”. While those conducting ethnographic studies and investigations may be seen to wield authority to control and use their subjects for their own explicit purposes (Kimpson, 2005), autoethnography takes into account the wellbeing of others.

Autoethnography is a vital option to what some believe is ethnography’s domineering and repressive practices (Pratt, 1999; Tierney, 1998). Autoethnography differentiates from conventional ethnography as its contents may be the initial path for those who have been disenfranchised in the past to contribute to a body of knowledge (Pratt, 1999). Indigenous epistemology is the expression of one’s introspective passage. Autoethnography can include both introspection and one’s experiences in the engagement with others.

Memory was wrapped within storytelling and cultural histories for use in my Indigenous paradigm. Memory work added to this process as an additional method of inquiry and feminist resource (Judaken, 2011; Kaufman, et al., 2006). The experiences and social places occupied by

the self-provided a way for knowledge production in autoethnography. This self-reflexive way of knowing was arrived at by the use of recalled cultural histories from memory, and from the recall and telling of stories from the past with connection to the present (Clare & Johnson, 2000; Kuhn, 2000; Morgan 2006). These methods of memory/storytelling and memory work provided a way to understand my individual journey, a way for analysis, and a way to appreciate and respect life's contradictions.

Reflections on Positionality

As a researcher, I sought to share aspects of myself with those I met in this experience, both away from and in the presence of Indigenous peoples (Kovach, 2009). Autoethnography placed me in the research journey. I used autoethnography to comprehend and reflect on work that was instinctive, as well as observed in my interactions with those of Native ancestry and others who I have interacted with over the years (Poulos, 2016). In this project:

To embrace Indigenous methodologies is to accept subjective knowledge. This is difficult for sectors of the Western research community to accept, and it is where much of the contention about Indigenous research arises. (Smith, 2005, p. 111)

I do not claim that my personal stories and ideas, or conclusions that were reached in my study, as equal to “stories of structural racism and exclusion” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 9). This study was a small personal exploration that tried to acknowledge lived experiences and cultural identity through engagement in reciprocal relationships (Lee & Quijada, 2010). My professional and personal stories “demonstrate[d] challenges and experiences endured” (p. 203) in social placement and interactions.

I have avoided using others' pain regarding unacknowledged systems of oppression (Fellows & Razack, 1998; Razack, 2007). I know to the best of my ability,

my own position at the margins, and the desire for a dominant society to keep reminders of those borders that they do not wish to inhabit (Anzaldua, 2012; Nora, 1989). I was deliberate in recognizing hierarchical relationships acknowledged by a shared history. My identity and containment, based on dominant constructs, did not position me as a way to disavow others, but as a means that understood my own subordination in light of society's oppressive realities.

It made sense to employ a methodology that honored a decolonized process, as the procedure for a study of significant value over the results (Smith, 2005). The decolonization process freed me to value the integrity of my stories in a holistic, encompassing way. Then I was able to embrace them as significant sources of information and data for my research, as well as a type of ontology (Lambert, 2014). Further, I desired to respect the specifics of my stories regarding histories, cultures, and communities as a method to decolonize my narratives away from a false stance or identity (Driskill et al., 2011). Memory and storytelling/histories, as well as memory work, helped me to respect the method as I engaged with my research using an Indigenous paradigm (Ballenger, 1997; Winker & Degele, 2011). I realized that Indigenous ways of knowing and Indigenous influences had traditionally been devalued and marginalized. By incorporating this into my research, it was my effort to value what had been previously silenced.

Research Design

Autoethnography became an introspective analysis of identity for me; it used personal transformation while allowing self-reflection that explored my perspective on the dynamics of the research circumstances (Bartlett, 2007; Berry & Patti, 2015). I had initially proposed to study how historical trauma affected the education of elder Native American women, and how traditional cultural practices were employed as coping mechanisms (Beads & Kuokkanen, 2007).

Instead, by employing a tool that was freed from a dominant culture's practices, autoethnography allowed me to detail my memories of interactions with Indigenous peoples, with historical texts written by indigenous women, and my own memories of connection and engagement with differences (my own and others) (Brown & Strega, 2005). These memories reflected my past from birth forward; they included experiences of education and helpfulness (given and received), and also my present context as an advisor. I did this in various settings, for reflection, and as a way to decolonize western practices. I am a participant in my own research that explored memories of my own fluid identities, and engaged with cultures that are mine and that are not my own. Autoethnography combined the *auto* (self), the *ethnos* (culture), and the *graphy* (research process) (Holt, 2003).

My lived experiences relied on a shared journey of learning about being an advisor through memories of relationships with Indigenous people—sharing stories and sharing lives (Clare & Johnson, 2000; Driskill, et al. 2011). Autoethnography was about heart and soul, with caring, feeling, passion, and vulnerability at the center. It connected social science and artful writing in the form of connection among heart-mind-culture-self (Ellis, 2009). I wished to honor and respect those who had shared their history and lives with me, as I too shared with them my personal life. There is no ethnographic factor or ethnographic analysis that could substitute for living, having daily interactions with people, and being given access and, at times, acceptance into their cultural group (Archibald, 2008). Through autoethnography, I intended to locate my research within small segments of my lived experiences, and within my walk to and with others.

The use of memory work, as well as memory and storytelling/histories, helped me to “reframe the old understandings of history and memory” (Clare & Johnson, 2000, p. 210). Prevalent histories cannot be regarded as the foundations of knowledge, but as rigid examples of

the dominant and oppressive ways of a patriarchal society (Errante, 2000; Fenske, et al., 2016; Kimpson, 2005). Their *truth* is not necessarily *my* truth. This study made room for the cultural power of others and their identities through forms of narration that enabled, but also constrained my study. Narration as a practice and as a cultural form supported social identity production “to exercise real agency and control” (Clare & Johnson, p. 214) that may be denied by the usual power dynamics of scholarly research.

Data Collection Methods

Data Sources

I used my written stories that reflected my memories as the primary data source for this dissertation (Kuhn, 2000; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). I spent many hours writing personal narratives of my past and my intersections with select others; the first 21 stories written over a 12-month period served as a kind of “pilot” for the study process, which I then expanded over an intensive 6-week additional timeframe of writing nearly every day for several hours a day to complete more stories until I believed that the major themes related to my research questions were written about. Table 1 below provides a listing of the story topics, their titles, and the number of pages for each of the personal stories I wrote for the pilot (before my prospectus defense and the design of the study was formalized). Table 2 represents additional stories I wrote as part of my dissertation data set, after the study was designed. Appendix A at the end of this dissertation provides all my stories.

Table 3-1. Pilot Stories for Dissertation Data

Title	Date	Pages
Being Slavic	6-10-16	4
Too poor for superstition	10-29-16	3
Corn soup	11-27-16	5
Nose	12-20-16	2
Mom's turn to learn	12-21-16	4
Wellbriety: a journey of forgiveness	1-4-17	3
Quilts/broken promises	1-7-17	4
Pony beads	1-25-17	9
Education & Indigenous women	1-26-17	5
Forgiveness	1-27-17	3
Spirit/energy quilt	2-1-17	4
Advisor as an educator/interceder	3-2-17	4
Dams story	4-20-17	4
Boarding schools and Native Americans	5-11-17	4
Horse story	5-12-17	3
Alaskan Natives: Subsistence, etc.	5-13-17	6
Lacrosse, identity, & representations	5-30-17	4
Dance fans/Finger Masks story	6-3-17	5
Elementary School story	6-4-17	3
Junior High story	6-5-17	3
High School story	6-9-17	5

Table 3-2. Stories Completed After Initial Pilot

Title	Date	Pages
Japanese Garden story	6-11-17	3
College story	6-14-17	4
Master's degree story	6-21-17	4
Doctoral Degree Story	6-27-17	3
ETSC story	7-1-17	5
Cross-cultural advising	7-10-17	4
Orientations story	7-11-17	4
F&CS story	7-19-17	5
MBA story	7-21-17	6

I stopped generating narratives when I felt confident that the themes relating to academic advising had been well-saturated, and provided a rich picture of my life from birth to the present. In addition to using these 30 memory stories as data, I wrote and reflected throughout this process to have a fuller sampling of lived experiences worthy of examination on a small scale. The memories of my shifting self-understandings and relationships reflected and refracted in these stories contributed deep knowledge related to my research questions (Swanson, 2000).

Secondary data sources included a researcher journal for reflecting on those memories via headnotes; small historical pieces of Native women that revealed tiny glimpses of socio-cultural knowledge related to education; photos that reflected on related thoughts and memories to this study; and academic literature brought together as an exploration of self in relation to others through the use of autoethnography (Nora, 1989; Mead, 1977; Bartlett, 2005).

Oral tradition and storytelling are often an integral piece to traditional cultures. Interrelationships are foregrounded in this process. In this way of knowing, one cannot be a passive observer (Archibald, 2008). To be respectful of the stories told to me, or stories involving others who related to me, I needed to maintain the confidentiality of those who played any role. The stories and artifacts of others combined with my own history through autoethnography (Allen & Piercy, 2005). I used pseudonyms and strived for more of a sense of an occurrence than to take an objective stance. This subjectivity allowed more freedom in my autoethnographic writing to be from my perspective, from my interpretation, and from my sense of self.

Autoethnography can transcend the constraint of research validity to an exploration of lives lived with the capacity to evoke reactions from readers that guide change (Ellis, 1998). Sheridan (2013) comments that “by including personal thoughts, feelings, and observations as a way to help understand what they are researching, autoethnographers are providing the reader with an insight into their thought process along with variables that are typically not measured with conventional research methods” (p. 1). I detailed my own personal discovery as I made choices in my interactions with others and lent insight into the meaning of one’s struggles through communication and storytelling (Freeman, 2015). By employing story and indigenous methodologies, I developed my own voice through understanding and arrangement, and engaged in a type of decolonizing practice (Bruyneel, 2004).

Participant and Setting

Autoethnography is research that examines social and cultural events and contexts with oneself as a lens, and one’s experience as what is being looked at (Holman Jones, 2005; Ellis, 2007; 2009). In autoethnography the researcher moves beyond traditional methods of writing, by using narrative poetry, stream-of-consciousness, displays of artifacts, photographs, drawings, and

live performances (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2008). As a participant and researcher, I wrote stories and created other texts through, and in consideration of, my own experiences while being aware of the subjectivity entrenched in the research process (Errante, 2000). Autoethnography is about culture and important issues, with the researcher being as much a lens as a sole participant.

My research used the observer as the observed, and honored the lives of those I interacted with, while being aware of the value-laden nature of inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). I located myself in those settings where I was able to interact with individuals of Aboriginal heritage. I honored these principles to guide research: communality of knowledge, relational accountability, reciprocity, and holism (acknowledge and attend to all aspects – physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual – of being and experience) (Wilson & Wilson, 2013). As both researcher and the one who was exposed through the medium of autoethnography, my stories and texts incorporated others and endeavored to transcend my own experiences and perceptions (Ellis & Bochner, 2006). For example, once I helped a friend get supplies for a soup kitchen supervised by her. As we drove to the stores she started sharing her experiences in higher education and how she enjoyed the comradery found in the class with her fellow students, as well as the content of her studies. I reflected in this instance that my own educational journey inspired her to share her story, as well as acknowledging that *our* comradery in kitchen work led to the sharing of this story.

My individual experiences were being used to research my involvement with those of Native ethnicity and to examine how memories, past and private, enlightened my knowledge as an academic advisor (Ellis, 2004; McClellan, 2007). In this exploration, I was both knower and known, as one who learned, and as one who was the object of study.

Data Collection

Autoethnography was a means of data gathering and interpretation that differed from a mainstream approach in that the data were in the texts, in this case my stories and secondary artifacts (Ellis & Bocher, 2000; 2006). I used my experiences as data to understand in context, reflected and wrote to create meaning, and to produce meaningful understandings for the readers. Denzin (1989) makes the distinction between ethnography and autoethnography using the role of self. By leaving behind the “objective outsider” of ethnography, the researcher reveals the self of the researcher as a data source. By transcribing and analyzing my experiences, I gained insights into practices that informed my new role as an advisor in my future journey (Ricci, 2003). Investigating the nature of identity has a sense of postcolonial distinction to “turn the gaze” inward and help realign research relationships between Native/non-Native, self/other, knower/known, and participant/observer so that the “lines between them are no longer so easily drawn” (Narayan, 1993, p. 6). My use of autoethnography pushed against convention while challenging my own sense of self. My educational journey revealed the complex sense of self that took place through the years, both from those looking on the outside, and by my own subjective stance.

I used personal data, stories, and headnotes, along with historical and academic literature, in the examination of the quality of my life and those lives with which I have interacted (Ellis, 2009; Freeman & Combs, 1996). This was done with an eye toward informing my practices as an advisor. Examples of historical trauma that informed my knowledge through challenging circumstances included my friends’ and my own displacement due to poverty, dam projects, boarding schools, environmental racism, tuberculosis, and maize nixtamalization (Hernandez-

Avila, 2002). Much of this information was acquired while interacting, volunteering, and donating my time in cultural and social settings of other people.

I searched for information on Indigenous women from the past who served in roles was broadly analogous to those of advisors. I utilized a literary device from Gloria Ladson-Billings' book *Beyond the Big House* (2005). She employed figures from the historic past to weave into her narrative of those whose lives are discussed in her book. She looked for figures representative of the standpoint and beliefs of her contributors. I looked for such complementary parallels in the past lives of Indigenous women to intertwine with my personal narratives. I planned on doing this in the form of drawing on a collective, historical memory as in the form of these figures. I looked to weave these parallel lives within my research for illustrative purposes, and was able to ground my narratives with lives past and present.

Headnotes, which are evocative memories of times and interactions, complemented this research. These types of written notations were more important than developing field notes (Wall, 2008). Coffey (1999) agreed that these types of recollections in our daily interactions are to be held in esteem. Margaret Mead (1977) understood and utilized headnotes throughout her extensive research. She used letter writing memories and reflections as a tool to share knowledge and test her ideas. An art often lost today, the writing of letters to act as place markers within our lives and memories can be useful and can develop into field notes depending on the researcher (Sanjek, 1990). Even looking to expand beyond the thought of field notes can be in disagreement with remembered oral histories or voices of those whose recollections are held dear (Lederman, 1990). One can even think of Indigenous oral histories as a type of headnote or memory passed from generation to generation. My headnotes consisted of those memories, those triggers that came through when I revisited my past educational journey. My autoethnographic narrative used

those headnotes as the genesis of my stories. My headnotes and letters were used as recollections that surfaced that required further exploration.

One example of this occurred when I wrote to my dear friend after the death of one of her children. As I was expressing my sincere thoughts to her, I remembered the shock and pain that enveloped my life when my mom, who lived with me, died unexpectedly in her sleep. The suddenness and finality when I went into her room to wake her was just devastating. Those memories overwhelmed as I was writing to my friend.

Once many of the narratives were appraised and evaluated, I was ready to process the information within my study. Reviewing collected data was a simple but necessary step toward data analysis. Evaluating the data involved reading narrative data, inspecting archival documents, and searching for detailed data for evaluation (Chang et al., 2012). I found the raw materials for my stories and related supporting commentaries.

Data Analysis Procedures

Stories and other artistic texts were not necessarily hard data that could be readily dissected. I used an analysis for meaning-making, made connections, identified special events, and analyzed relationships between myself and others—in light of academic literature (Ellis & Bochner, 2006). Researchers may use differing types of narration to embody themselves, others, and the interchange of cultures. I made a conscious effort to integrate a balanced narrative for both the culture and the researcher (Adams et al., 2014). This aided in understanding how the exploration served to explain my intersections of social identities. These narrations were conceived as a decolonized, alternative research response to dominant power structures (Fenske, et al., 2016). This made a space for decolonized research in the present with stories and narration

from memory, storytelling and cultural histories, and memory work (Giorgio, 2013; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012).

As I used my stories as my data, I attempted to challenge the traditional ways of examining and classifying those who have been othered (Wall, 2008; Winn, 2013). The premise of the authoritativeness of western research methods and conclusions was confronted with the unequal power relationship that allowed for labeling and for defining of others (Behar, 1996; Tuck & Yang, 2012). As a non-Native researcher, I wanted to challenge the premise of colonized research methods into more a culturally sustaining one. I examined the cultural realities my own and others' educational journeys.

The representations in my stories and storytelling were subjective in nature as resistance to the codification of knowledge through conventional methods (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). This unconventional approach changed the framing of self, culture, and society. I negotiated the spaces between my multiple identities and my ancestral origins through the narration of my life.

Storytelling as Analysis

In the literature on autoethnography and the analysis of data, there was scant agreement regarding the mere existence of data analysis and an explanatory stage within this type of research, and debate as to whether this even exists (Chang et al., 2012). The support for a lack of formal data analysis and explanation was made from the stance that the act of engagement in one's personal narratives entailed investigation and analysis as a researcher deliberated over the types and content of their stories.

Autoethnography may be used to make social sciences continuous with literature, and to make a written account that employed a subjective approach agreeable as a type of sociological communication (Denzin, 2006). In fact, according to some autoethnographers, traditional

analysis is no more appropriate to understanding, interpreting, or changing people than is storytelling (Ellis & Bochner, 2006). Since research is not value-free and is filled with subjective and competing realities, I wanted to embrace this in my analysis.

I incorporated small samples from the background of historical figures similar to those employed in the writings of Ladson-Billings (2005). There was a negotiating of convention within the parameter of autoethnography. This stance permitted the politics of everyday life to transcend formality or permanence. Transformative research took place where western practices gave way to alternative ways of knowing (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012).

Storytelling is integral to oral histories of human beings and some Indigenous peoples, and is ideal within autoethnographic research (Ballenger, 1997). These very stories are then integral to the analysis of the data or stories collected. In this way,

back and forth autoethnographers gaze: first they look through an ethnographic wide-angle lens focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations. (Ellis, 2004, pp. 37-38)

Stories told through personal narratives lent themselves to analysis as they are being written and organized. Data analysis began during data collection since the process of data collection enlightens its very analysis (Chang et al., 2012). For example, as I was evoking my memories in the form of generating pilot data stories and later additional stories, I engaged in preliminary data analysis by thinking about how this resisted practices that perpetuated rigidity and stereotyping (Denzin, et al., 2008). Both the parallels and the intersections transgressed convention, as well as embraced it. This helped me to understand that the course of my life

brought me to a place where I confronted and reframed social and cultural identity in this limited way.

The examination and investigation of the data collected through autoethnography allowed me to place scholarly emphasis on the written stories that were analyzed (Delamont, 2016). This brought a purposefulness to the research conducted, however limited in range and scope. Inquiries were utilized to investigate the information gathered by employing a descriptive lens (Freedman & Combs, 1996). This helped in the beginning of organizing, evaluating, and categorizing data into needed formats that determined commonalities within the data collected. Remembering, while engaged in this analysis, that doing anti-oppressive research, meaning-making was not limited or confined to a certain part of the study process, but was in fact an integral part during the unfolding of interpretation, construction of meaning, and reflection (Brown & Strega, 2005).

Coding and Memos

The stories and related data and information were organized by subject matter in keeping with the dates of occurrences (Delamont, 2016). This type of format simplified the process of analysis. The gathered information was grouped into different categories such as written data, narrative data, and head notes.

Before the understanding and the rationalization of the information could be attempted, the informational data brought together for research purposes was uncovered for examination and possible explanation (Chang et al., 2012). This information was broken down into sections and groupings. Organizing in this manner enabled the information from this study to be more easily opened to meaning-making and interpretation. Reconnection with the research data then

took place by discerning hidden ideas and themes that were previously undiscovered (Chang et al., 2012).

Taking a cue from traditional qualitative research designs, the data was triangulated via contrasting and comparing information in written narrative accounts of the researcher with records and stories uncovered during the research journey (Ellis, 1998; Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Information was collected from multiple sources. This process augmented reliability of the data through the mixture of some data compilation approaches or data resources (Newman & Benz, 1998). The utilization of possible informational sources increased the proposed trustworthiness of the results (Moon et al., 1990).

There are many ways to code and categorize for themes. I have resisted traditional labels, definitions, and power structures, with their exclusionary practices, to embrace the relationships and experiences within the stories. My medicine bag is full of gerunds.

Using grounded theory as my process of analysis, I employed gerunds for narrative analysis (Russell, 2014). Interpretation of my data and the mining of my theoretical codes were guided by gerund use. The constant comparison used in my data analysis allowed for questioning and testing of story contents throughout the process. Anxiety and distress were acknowledged companions in this procedure because of having to lay open highly personal aspects of my life, both past and present.

Kathy Charmaz (2014) in her grounded theory work promotes the use of gerunds for coding data. A heuristic device is employed by in line-by-line coding with gerunds (Tweed & Charmaz, 2012). Though researchers often code at a general level, actions represented by gerunds helps to bring the researcher into the data. This assists in defining implicit meanings and their related actions. Directions, suggestions, and comparisons regarding the data are revealed

during these processes (Charmaz, 2014). Gerunds produce paths to follow for successive data collection and indications to check against prior data collected (Tweed & Charmaz, 2014; Charmaz & Keller, 2016). Coding with gerunds and examining the resulting processes permits discernment of implicit connections while allowing control over both the data and the emerging analysis (Charmaz, 2014, p.124).

Codes that emerged from this data were then divided into three categories reflective of my perspectives and views: Indigenous, feminist, and cultural competency. The gerunds obtained, and their delineated groupings, appear in Appendix B. These groupings required patience to make as I embraced the challenge while attempting to keep a detachment from the data being analyzed.

My search for historical information on Indigenous women looked to culture and society in relation to self. This autoethnography used a small channel for a glimmer of possible change and a means to begin the conversation on a variety of social quandaries and distresses related to advising (Ellis, 2002). I provided a small bridge from the alienation one can feel as the subjugated other in the shift to an alternative emancipatory research.

I used a literary format employed by Lather and Smithies (1997) in *Troubling the Angels: Women Living with HIV/AIDS*. Their use of different narrations and stories within unique presentations as part of their book served as a model to display my data analysis. Within each of the gerunds are four groupings of text: my narrative samples; headnotes; photos with relational interpretations; and short tales from historical Indigenous lives of women. I want this arrangement to employ an unconventional display of my original analysis to serve in the interest of my writing and in the interest of the reader.

Ethical Considerations

Doing evocative autoethnography ethically is a cornerstone to anyone engaged in this type of research methodology (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). My study would not exist without this consideration and an overarching guide during this research. Autoethnography served my study well as a constant in the process of research methodology as well as ontology. The true nature of self in and of relation to others was realized by employing autoethnographic research. It allowed me to reveal behind a subjective curtain my memories, my reactions, and my shifts in sense of self throughout my educational experiences.

Originally I considered doing interview research with the women who show up in my memories and are re-voiced in my narratives. However, there were issues that prohibited this line of research. Some of the women I know have passed away due to advancing years. Some are only tangentially of Indigenous heritage, so the whole issue of identity and hurt feelings over exclusion might have come into play. Also, due to my low status as someone without much social or political standing, those who are enrolled in a recognized tribal affiliate could risk censure or possible banishment or disenrollment due to any participation in a research study with me. As a researcher with no means to offer remuneration or advantageous political connections to current tribal governance, I could possibly put these women and/or their families at risk by researching and reporting on their experiences. In tribal nations, currently there has been attention given to tribal disenrollment that may be used politically to banish an individual and, at times, their families. This not only includes loss of tribal affiliation, but loss of culture and home—to face an expulsion from the society of one's ancestors. This is something that I would never risk in the name of doing research.

Those outside of Indigenous communities or without connections to those of Indigenous heritage may not be aware of how the threat of tribal censure, banishment, or disenrollment can impact a person. I had within my extended family, a now-deceased female relative considered to be a non-status Indian in the eyes of the nation of Canada. This colonization process targeting Native women in Canada would strip women of their heritage upon marrying a non-Native (Lawrence, 2003). To the First Nations' peoples of Canada, colonialism interfered with their nationhood and their very tribal citizenship (Napoleon, 2001). By employing western European patriarchal bias, Native men continued to enjoy tribal status when they married non-Native women, and in fact, bestowed Native status to any non-Native they would marry. Though this has changed in my lifetime, it came too late to restore the identity and rightful heritage to my relative. She lived her life as an outcast from her rightful community.

These ethical considerations regarding tribal status are very real today. Tribes have sovereign authority to determine their own membership, and often, the line between banishment and disenrollment is arbitrary (Swift, 2001). I've personally witnessed the desolation and division caused within an individual and with their family by losing what was seen as their birthright heritage when they were young. Though not often talked about, these types of occurrences can still take place. So with those reminders, I made a conscious decision not to directly engage with Indigenous participants for my study.

I am indebted to those who offered their friendship and opened their lives to me in the spirit of reciprocity and to their communities to not betray confidences (Ellis, 2007). I have neither the interest nor an imagined incentive to use their real identities. Obfuscation and misdirection were at the center of identifiers used for those living within my narrations. There was a concerted effort to take into consideration the anguish and anxiety they may have

experienced at those times (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). I kept a sense of empathy for those residing in my autoethnographic stories.

I have acted in accordance with a respect and admiration for those participants within my headnotes, memories, and narratives. An ethical stance in my research demanded that I looked at the whole of a moment or situation, without consideration to hierarchical status (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). During this research I continued to keep at the forefront self-reflection and self-examination regarding my usage of story participants and their lived community experiences (Gonzalez-Lopez, 2011). Although in a broad sense I desired to correct a perceived injustice in some nominal fashion, I engaged in reflexivity as a reminder of the extreme limitations to my small study (Berry & Patti, 2015). I wanted to go beyond the simplistic cause and effect to examine my agency or lack thereof, as well as recognizing my limitations within this framework.

Again, the true fear of retaliation, whether implied or realized, drew me to a more intimate and personally responsible research methodology in autoethnography (Mairs, 2008). My findings do not intend to generalize beyond my own journey as an individual through autoethnography and its ethical considerations (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). By pursuing the methods involved in autoethnography, I avoided giving another person influence over what was included in my stories (Lopate, 2013). It is my unique stance and memories/headnotes that were included in the narrative stories. I was careful to include those others in my stories ethically and with respectful consideration (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). Thought, deliberation, and reflection on ethical considerations had an impact on those appearing in my stories, as well as an impact on my personal research journey (Josselson, 1996).

Summary

Autoethnography centers attention on how we live, and brings us into lived experiences in a feeling and embodied way. The ethical considerations that come into play when writing personal narratives serve as the center of autoethnographic stories (Ellis & Bochner, 2006). The research can transcend the original purpose of the study to evaluate and investigate through a variety of means, to enhance meaning-making (Chase, 1996).

By relaying and interpreting our narrative tales through autoethnography, we start the process of discovering the ways in which their very substance may be drawn from our own culture and social interactions (Allen & Piercy, 2005). Autoethnography may be used as a means to call for social justice in our society. By placing a sense of significance and worth to the anguish experienced in our life's journey, we may avow the lived lives of others who we have met in social interactions, as well as our own personal passages through our lifetimes (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). Autoethnography is a methodology that has earned a place in the collective scholarly identity of research. While on this research expedition, I kept myself aware of Richardson's (1999) criteria for autoethnography as making a substantive contribution, having aesthetic merit, employing reflexivity, and thus having an impact—in the context of my small research study.

Chapter 4: Findings

Autoethnography has supported me as it allows me to be objectified within the safe space of my own study. This safety gives way to my individual experiences and meanings. I have used my narratives to empower and resist othering as explained by Fine (1994) in her essay *Working the Hyphens*. The use of autoethnography has provided space within the research process for issues of multiple identities in these marginalized spaces. Specifically, the findings presented in this chapter have helped me to answer my research questions for this dissertation about how the complex, shifting, and sometimes fluid intersections of my identities influence the formation of decolonizing advisory relations in my role of academic advisor by using autoethnographic memory work to facilitate a deeper understanding of the roles of my identities in these relations.

Nine gerunds ran like threads through the thirty stories that I composed as my main data source. I incorporated them with my headnotes and figures from the Indigenous historic past. These gerunds are subjective and serve as examples of what spoke best to me through this process. The gerunds are important concepts in my stories. These are ideas and feelings that are like contents of my medicine bag. They are intangibles in my metaphorical medicine bag that exhibit fragmented thoughts, ideas, experiences, and memories that inform my role as an advisor. Traditional medicine bags may carry tangible tokens from the earth and life. My medicine bag carries the woven threads of my gerunds that inform Indigenous, feminist, and culturally competent approaches.

The nine gerunds discussed in this chapter are: being, becoming, including, sharing, regarding, making, learning, meaning, and working. To structure the presentation of each gerund, I have employed a literary device used by Lather and Smithies (1997) in their *Troubling the Angels: Women Living with HIV/AIDS*. Though my study pales in the shadow of their

magnificent work, their use of different narrations, stories, and unique presentations of their material served as a guide to writing up my findings chapter. Within each of the nine gerunds are four textual groupings: my narrative samples; headnotes; photos with relational interpretations; and historical Indigenous lives. My intention is that using this arrangement will serve both in the presentation of my research journey and in the interest of the reader. The arrangement is a concrete demonstration of my scholarly, spiritual expedition through life.

Each of these nine gerunds starts with ruminations on my life experiences as brought to mind by each of them. Possible or actual academic advising moments are examined and elucidated. These are used to bring into focus my actions and challenges of influence and understanding, as related to my research questions.

Borrowing the idea from the Lather and Smithies' (1997) book, I used an imaginative divider to delineate points where the text leaves the expected to delve into differing forms of narration. Where their book had delightful angel wings, I went for a more accessible approach that I could find via my word processing abilities. I used **g**, the turned g from the letter of the Latin alphabet to represent a simple medicine bag or amulet. In this effort I employ three of these symbols at a time, spaced seven times across the page. The trio of symbols represents the Indigenous, the feminist, and the cultural competence themes I used to differentiate my stories. My medicine bags are filled with narrative subject matters.

My headnotes consist of memory fragments and expressions as triggered by revising my past educational journey. They appear in the delineated categories as random musings; a sort of rift on the music played in my mind. The composition of this music is in free-form headnotes that are casual cogitations that came to my attention during this exploration.

Following the headnotes are photos with notes related to my cultural interactions. Some photos are objects that had meaning at certain moments in my life. Others portray snapshots of me at differing stages of existence trying to come to grips with the uncomfortable glare of introspective research. Being both the researched and the researcher is dynamic as well as painful.

The fourth section within each gerund type is the literary device used by Gloria Ladson-Billings (2005) in her book *Beyond the Big House*. I too have employed figures from the historic past to interlace into my story. I used complementary parallels in the past lives of Indigenous women to link with my personal narratives. It is employed for illustrative purposes, and as a means to ground my narratives with lives past and present. These historical moments are differentiated by having the text boxed so they may stand out. Four of these are taken from *Wise Women: From Pocahontas to Sarah Winnemucca, Remarkable Stories of Native American Trailblazers* (Turner, 2009). These are the more traditional types of historical moments. Two moments are from the memoirs of woman of mixed Indigenous ancestry from Montana. And three of them are stories related to the Iroquoian gantowisas, women in their representative power (Mann, 2000). This is done as acknowledgement of the gantowisas now an intricate part of my life.

I use my stories as an attempt to challenge the traditional ways of examining and classifying those that have been othered. The foundation of the credibility of western research methods and their results is confronted with the inadequate power association that allowed for the labeling and for the defining of *others*. I am hoping to uncover how the intersections of my identities influence the advising commons as well as how my memory work serves to recognize the role of my identities in these interactions.

Gerunds as Medicine Bag Contents

Being

My reality, my existence in our new century came into *being* as a non-traditional graduate student pursuing a master's degree. As research toward my degree, I met with elder Indigenous women engaged in cultural traditions. The privilege of being in their presence has been profoundly defining in both my educational pursuits and in my private life. Their ontology, their viewpoints and wisdom came into being in a gentle unfolding. Events, customs, and ways of knowing were slowly revealed during these precious moments. Being there during their engagement in cultural traditions was a gift most valuable and costly only in my time.

As the years visiting passed, my Indigenous friends became more and more involved in quilting. My presence gave way into an eventual wonderful reveal: each of these quilts that I saw being constructed had a secret inside—treaty cloth! This cloth is received yearly by the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) from our country per the Treaty of Canandaigua signed in 1794 by the Iroquois and United States. Had I not been in attendance in this journey year to year with them as I came to call, I would not have obtained this crucial knowledge. Their thoughts, their systems of thinking, their very being were a revelation hidden inside of their marvelous handiwork.

The actuality of the moment is remembered in the advising space. Many students are away from home for an extended period of time for the first time in their lives. There is security in being among those that share your history, culture, and traditions. This security, this familiarity is now missing from their immediate lives. Where do they find others with shared concepts, values, and beliefs? A student in my presence may be having an experience that transcends their academic lives. It is the *whole* student that comes for their appointments.

I hope to promote a love for the learning experience in higher education as I had discussed with my closest friend of Native ancestry. There is a comradery of being in the presence of fellow students. This can be drawn upon in a variety of ways. Study groups could sprout from these encounters. A friend that may be counted upon for notes if a student misses a class. Classroom experiences can be shared by students to explain to others what to expect or how to prepare for the academic quarter with a specific instructor or on a specific topic.

Students will often ask me how a certain class is and how hard is the professor on students. I couch my interactions by honestly stating that I haven't been at the university long enough to have an opinion on a professor, just on the course itself and its need for the student's academic progress in their major. There are times where I do happen to know that previous students had a difficult experience with an instructor or a certain course. In this actuality, I tell my advisee that a course may be challenging; that a professor may be highly rigorous in their classroom expectations. I try to keep a delicate balance in a journey of encouragement and caution that they should take each subject as one to build upon in many of their academic pathways.

Some of the international students have burdens along with many challenges that being an international student brings. Their lives previous to college may have been immersed in their communities and their social structures. They often have to deal with the many stringent guidelines before them. One might assume that these difficulties only affect students from overseas. I've encountered students from our neighbor to the north who have a similar journey, though without the added issues language may bring. These realities of life intrude on their academic aspirations and on their personal living conditions. As their academic advisor I need to provide a space where *being* is valued along with positive academic progress.

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Existing for more than me. Done that for a while;
now trying to do it in earnest outside of my invisible
force field. Ugh, how do I read these papers full of
specious, spurious, and or fallacious statements. I as a
presence in their lives for the briefest of movements.
Thank you for the reassurance today. I am full of
insidious wonderings. You can't *really* believe that?
No apologies. Where is your mind; where is your
humanity? Scared and scared of this reality. I see
your sad, dirty little soul. Will you be more than this.

Tearing me up inside. I really have no idea what you
are talking about. Mortal more than I, or more
pathetic. Considering life in actuality. What am I
talking about? This is my fate to see what I feared
come to life? Trembling at the thought. Want and
wait for more. Time is almost up. Flash of existence.
Fire of tears burns them up. Fearless essence
disappears. Confess to burden of base element.
Another corner, another game; the spirit flickers.



Figure 4-1. Pussy willow tree in Tuntutuliak, Alaska

Welcoming friend in the tundra being itself. This pussy willow tree (genus *Salix*) was an unexpected familiar companion from the past. The furry catkins were a presence in my place of worship during my younger years. Instead of palms being used, the fluffy blossoms or aments were part of our tenet for those days. Palms did not grow where the ancestors came from, though pussy willows did. A tangible reminder of past peoples living, being part of colder, unwelcoming climes. Never forgot; touched me to my core. Appreciate token of survival in the midst of subsistence. Alive establishing permanence in a world I visited once.

Weaving baskets as part of base existence though actually more a part of her, like breathing. Her truth, her beliefs and convictions, her very being were showcased in the work of the hands. Dat So La Lee, as a Washoe woman, made these functional containers—part of culture; part of life in the Nevada. (Turner, Ed., 2009) Like the Paiute, no clans are part of their history. Dat So La Lee merged different styles of basketry and weaving into something uniquely her own. She lived from the 19th century to the early 20th as a washerwoman exploited and subjected to mythmaking by non-natives to utilize her creations. These baskets created had no tribal or cultural significance apart from the origins of Dat So La Lee. Her constructions formed from her journey, her survival in face of permanence no longer permanent. She wove to appeal to others; to sell for a life remaining despite unwelcomed changes. Her nature and her being were intertwined with her designs and constructions.

Becoming

How do you become a life-long learner? Graduate school had transformed my journey into a place of *becoming* even as my years draw to a not-too-distant close. Growing, changing with each interaction is a challenge. My curiosity gives way to my becoming, my growing as a person into the writer of these words in a moment of time. Reality, my existence has become something more through my relationships with others.

Part of my becoming was a passage to moments of understanding related to Yup'ik dance fans. I encountered these beautiful creations in a museum long before having the opportunity to visit a place of their genesis. There in the arctic tundra a shift of emphasis gave way to learning of the Peoples' (Yup'iks' word for their society) desire to promote life-long learning to their young people. Part of their ontology was their responsibility to subsequent generations. In this pursuit they were becoming models for transferring knowledge. This transformation was valued by their community and integral to their becoming. Their nature was to impart knowledge as a treasure; treasure more valued than anything physical or tangible. Earthly valuables were worthless compared to information and understanding of the ways one comes into being.

Just as some Lakota peoples saw aging as their lives slowly becoming one with their environments, the Alaskan Natives I encountered were attempting to show appropriate and effective learning environments. In these spaces a student's becoming is seen as congruous with their worldview and cultural traditions.

In academic advising, a well-chosen and presentable path may be shown to a student in a variety of ways. There must be an emphasis placed on university policies and procedures. Students must learn what these are in order for effective adherence to take place. Reminders are placed in classrooms; policies are spelled out in syllabuses; residence halls reinforce these

structures; and the advisor must have suitable take on this all. I have a need to bring this background to an advisee appointment as well as to the classroom.

There is tracking on grades and personal interactions. This record keeping must include specificity on types of appointments: in-person, by phone, or by email. Perhaps the student just dropped in. Tracking on other interactions also is kept. Faculty and staff interactions and the type must be accounted for. There may be a prospective or future incoming student accompanied by a parent who stops by unexpectedly. When they've traveled a distance, it is not practical to ask them to make a future appointment, so I must become a presentable and suitable advocate for their program of interest in a moment's notice.

In these personal interactions, I am aware that the institution that I serve has quantifiable learner outcomes and assessments that it is attempting to meet. In becoming an academic advisor, I balance this with my student's needs during the advising appointment. My journey to assist student growth and development has to come with my institutional requirements. As my students come into being, so must quantifiable interactions be counted toward the continued growth or becoming of our university.

My approach to academic advising has to be concrete and communicative, as well as open to decolonizing the experience for students. I must question how I may promote the life-long learner in each person that I encounter. Some just want enough to get through and get on to their life's work, so to speak. Others are seeking the full journey of becoming, seeking engagement while learning the requirements and details of a specific academic pathway. Some want what is befitting in other's expectations while there are students trying to become their real true versions of themselves that they hope for and see in their mirrors. I will aid them in their passage of becoming.

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I have to do this. No question. A purpose in life. A potential for pleasure. A student found where their potential lays. They came at first tentative; would I help knowing they were leaving? Came here first thinking the program was one thing; found it was another. Now, at last, the future is in sight. Much work and determination lay ahead. *Climbing up the walls*. Becoming is difficult work. Wanting to do what is presentable, acceptable, and effective. Belonging will come at last through this new

pathway. Student now comes by more often to a place of becoming as unfolding and assistance are both present. We go through the current obstacles together; weaving through a conduit. I with my machete of need; student with a renewed purpose. There is insight, help, and a safe space within my office walls to navigate this complex crossing. Find the key to unlock the memories in the attic



Figure 4-2. Finger Dance Fans.

These dance fans caught my fancy in a museum many years ago. Wondered about their becoming; how were they made? These fingertip fans were embraced by Yup'ik women to illustrate during a dance stories of community activities and social encounters. A story of becoming all that is of value to their peoples is revealed in the movements and motions of their dance fans. Symbolization gives way through thoughts and dreams. Whiskers, feathers, grass give way to the *genuine person*, as Yup'ik means.

The becoming of a woman with Indigenous ancestry was found in a story from western Montana's past. It was decided by the country that claimed the land as its own that Emma Magee had no rights as someone of mixed blood (Patterson, 2011; McComas, 1981). Recognized enrollment into a tribal nation rises and falls with favor of the colonizers. Acculturation was the reason stated for forced schooling. It was, in their words, the best for all concerned. Nothing less than assimilation into the dominant culture would provide the key to a peaceful and contented life. To be born in Hell Gate (Missoula valley in western Montana) is to be born into a ghost town. The bodies have left; the spirits remain. This place of ambush, in the Salish word, now provides the name for the neighboring town; in present day largest in the region. It would be for her a place to lie in wait. For becoming means to conceal her true self, a person caught between two worlds.

Including

Ontological pursuits of *being* and *becoming* give way to *inclusion*. There I accommodate and interpolate my life and my academic journey. I took a college trip to Alaska that had an immersion experience to a Yup'ik village in the southwestern tundra of Alaska. Being part of this trip was important in many ways, though certainly not advisable when you are an older, nontraditional student. Acceptance does not necessarily follow including one's self in uncomfortable spaces. I reconciled myself that there was a tradeoff in the positive far outweighing the negative in the final analysis. Much more of my mental energy was spent on the gains of the trip than on the irritations. Yes, it is important to be included but equally important are the reminders of the hierarchical structures of any organization, even those that prescribe to social justice.

Hierarchy and inclusivity are concepts to remember when encountering students and their parents or supportive guardians throughout the orientation process in the summer. Though intensive and pressure-packed, this is for many of them their first actualization of a long hoped for dream. For some it is a goal and expectation for their children to be present in higher education. For others the very inclusion of their dependent in this experience is a dream come to fruition. They marvel at the experience and that they are heard and significant.

Parents or guardians who accompany students to orientations have many of the expected questions and issues related to academic progress. Others though have questions that might be mundane to some though important to them. I encountered guardians waiting for their students in order to eat dinner ask me about buying sheets for the dorms. Students from a marginalized or disadvantaged background may be hard pressed to find extra-long twin sheets to fit their dorm beds. I never knew such a bed size existed until I went to college so many years ago. These types

of essential conversations are ones that I am happy to take part. Though part of my distant past, I can still recall how some things that were of no issue to my classmates where major hurdles for me.

My academic advising must accompany a sense of inclusive togetherness. Many of the Native elder peoples I've met since coming back to graduate school were open and inclusive with me. They embraced my questions and research in this spirit saying they were open and happy to assist. They opened their life's journey to include me in a small moment of their life. How could I do any less for my students or those who support them?

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Tired and unhappy, not to mention perplexed. Take me home. I want to be a part of your life again; part of no surprises. Comfort in that. No, that's a lie. Traveling in the clouds; the pain near in dreams. Rejected in 'mares. Gave so-called best amidst waves. Carry the bond and the heart that aches. Dream within a dream; lost without a trace. When does this become clear. Come back to mess and destruction while trying to comprehend. Its dark in

this cellar. Embrace the wreckage as it sinks. Like mercury the danger; a substance to behold. Worries and fears embody my day. Encircled; things aren't what they used to be. Take into account; accommodate; compromise; make allowance for. Sure, that's the trick. Cut me; you know you want to. Subsumed into this great nothingness. Wouldn't it be nice if I could have delusions in all the colors. Then might feel encircled in acceptance; encircled in love.

A symbol that brought me comfort. Including parts of my heritage into something stark and beautiful. This raven sculpture stood at the front of the Alaska Native Heritage Center which was incorporated with icons and symbols from the faith of my ancestors. A welcome respite from a journey plagued with difficulties and tribulations. Who knew trials would be faced here? I'd go back to Alaska, without their baggage if I could.



Figure 4-3. "Raven, the Creator" by Aleut artist John Hoover

Containing, involving, including others is natural to some societies. Reciprocity was the rule; an integral part of community and culture in Iroquoian (Haudenosaunee) communities. The gantowisas, the elder women of the Haudenosaunee established ways of inclusion for all despite origins (Mann, 2000). The revered old ones modeled a system of eating from one bowl (p.85) to demonstrate that all were included; all were enfolded into the one of them. No longer would they see difference but now there was an acknowledged support, protection, and respect. Nothing to dread as has been perpetuated by stories told today. There was a balance maintained and represented in the bonding between Sky Woman and the Lynx. Bonding and balancing of pairs was integral to their daily lives; to build their society. Gender distinctions were made formal and rigid only due to outside influence and emphasis. The gantowisas embraced all in the past as well as receiving others to be included in their present.

Sharing

The ways of *being* and *becoming* have led to including spaces for *sharing*. It's painful to recall about Columbus, from Zinn's (2005) book, in his encounters with Indigenous peoples of the so-called new world. Columbus wrote that the Indians they encountered, with their openness, largess, and notion of sharing what they had with others, made them ideal candidates for enslavement as the living embodiment of Christianity. Their openness and friendship was used to exploit and diminish them. A painful history of European exploration always remembered. Despite this, I can recall the sharing of knowledge with me by two Alaskan Natives (a brother and sister) who were forced from their homes to attend mandatory boarding school each year. They were still willing to participate in my research and questions.

In Alaska I encountered Yup'iks who still believed in sharing food, providing gifts, and making up for what others lack. The distribution of what they had in all ways was valued and promoted. The generosity of their sharing was most gratefully acknowledged. I can't imagine

how recalling painful memories to assist me must have felt. If they were sharing with me, I needed to show I cared and respected what they had to say.

I still feel the friendship gifted to me by the brother. When he had time to talk and meet with me in their village, I tried to be present. The one time I caved in to pressure from my group to be elsewhere, still causes me to wince. So, how will I bring the spirit of sharing into the advising space?

An Indigenous elder gave me one of the lap quilts that she had made. This unexpected sharing of her talent with me was a profound experience. I've bought many of her quilts since then, but that gift will always stay with me.

I've experienced sharing by my colleagues – my fellow academic advisors. Whether it's their expertise, their documents to model, or their advice, their cooperation and friendship has been quite meaningful. One academic advisor shared how they and many on campus do outreach on the micro and macro level toward students' food insecurities. Though my previous university has a central food bank for students, this university has not only that, but a food bank placement in certain additional buildings.

I embraced the distribution of food on a small scale in our building. I contribute to the food bank rack in our building, as well as having food items and small water bottles available to students in my office space for sharing with them. This is something I saw modeled not only by a fellow academic advisor, but by the Yup'iks. They freely share and try to make up for what others lack. I was lacking in knowledge and they shared their painful memories with me.

Distributing to students in such a small scale is an acknowledgement of need, as well as a continued note of gratitude to those whose sharing was modeled before me. Of course, it is expected that I will share information, facts, and figures with the students I encounter. By

participating in the sharing of my limited means through food to my students and others, I am valuing what I encountered and embraced in others.

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Confusing existence. Bewilderment; change;
depression. *Yesterday I woke up sucking a lemon.*
Not that this would really happen in my life. Like the
scent; hard time removing the fruit from the pie I
despise. The look of disdain though we share a
physical defect. Defect that will limit them; has
limited me. A smack in the face to know your body
has let you down. Me too; I was once young and in

great shape when my body let me down. Now you
have to maybe adjust your dreams. Cruel reality. You
have something in common with a fat old female
doing a job you would like to dismiss. But you've
needed the assistance. This person has been a
resource sharing her knowledge of a program while
sharing in a small way the frustrations of being let
down. She remembers; support comes from the
places.



Figure 4-4. Me in majorette uniform.

Sharing a picture from my high school years is an attempt to include the reader on a tentative step to my personal nature. My legs are not reliable. I never know when an ankle may go, but more importantly—a knee. There is palatable frustration of an operation and the knowledge that perhaps you can never run and do things like the rest. You may fall and be injured again. Perhaps letting down others in the process, though I know I just can't count on my body; even after an operation.

Sharing restorative actions of Grandmother Moon as told through the Gantowisas, Iroquoian Women (Mann, 2000). The presence; the joining of the Elder Spirits of Sky and Earth give way to enlightening stories from the Haudenosaunee of their creation and community. The Four Winds bring medicine to heal and help in times of need. Reclamation and restoration of what was before and perhaps might be again. In this tradition, your journey is not forgotten, and neither is your pain. Before reclamation and recovery has to be the ache; the hurting. Beauty and light surround and give strength that is shared by these Elder Spirits. They are pleased to encourage and assist. They are open to sharing their knowledge with others.

Regarding

Including and *sharing* the disclosure of existence is compelling work. Now *regarding* takes me to a place for reason and justification. Attention, concern, and specificity toward my return to education in the ad from my previous university regarding *Mom's Turn to Learn*. This program, developed through the women's and gender studies' department, brought me back to school. While in graduate school, I slowly and deliberately learned to do research with older Native women engaged in traditional ways of knowing regarding their background. Respect for their values was an integral part of this process. During the process of research engagement with elder Indigenous peoples, distinct past memories held great bitterness regarding the events they witnessed and endured. I admired that they were willing to share with me, despite the pain recalled. My interest gave way to their reason for disclosure regarding their ever-present ache.

These same opportunities led to discussions with Yup'ik elders regarding cultural connections. I contacted a local artisan regarding her earrings. Her artistry was something I held in high esteem. I was fortunate to be able to acquire a small example of their cultural intertwined with a small exquisite form of art.

During these experiences, the need to learn more about cultural competency became apparent. In the unfolding process of acquiring cultural competency, there was little to none in the way of guidance regarding what one could do. In these instances, on my own I sought avenues to acquire these important skills.

My identities as a non-traditional student, a novice researcher, and an interested oldster combined to encourage the continuation of my educational and career pursuits. In my advising relationships, I strive to go beyond the prescribed western ideals modeled in many of the advising missions, visions, and goals. A recalled nursing manual perpetuated ethnic stereotypes,

and presented approaches to Native American peoples as a monolithic group. With over 500 federally recognized tribal nations in the United States, there is greater diversity than is found among the countries of Europe.

My advisees have various roles that include academics that intersect with these roles. In the advising space, I must be cognizant to *regard* these during my preparation and my interactions with students. There is value in weighing the importance of their scores and recorded aptitudes regarding their measured academic accomplishments thus far.

I must also respect other factors that a student brings with them. Some students want considerations made for their family issues, their financial constraints, and other important obstacles in the path of their academic success. These are valuable factors and indicators of possible intervention needs in the future.

In a decolonizing approach, I must keep in mind that what is on paper or what they have experienced in their lives to this point may not necessarily result in difficulties. I must be careful not to stereotype a student based on leading indicators or perceived outcomes and goals of a university. There is a conscious regarding taking place to avoid these possible pitfalls. A simple question on a student's possible heritage language must be deflected until the student wishes to reveal that fact about them. There has to be a regard for including a space for sharing and becoming during our time together.

My approach to advising is driven by the individual student's needs before, during, and after an advising interaction. How can I appropriately prepare and gather needed information for my student? How do I stay present and in the moment during the advising appointment to *regard* their spoken and unspoken needs and issues? Beyond making notes and records of our

interactions, how do I follow up with a student, as needed, to insure that there is a true respect/*regard* for their experiences in higher education?

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Sit, stand, kneel, pray. Prescient lines from son's poem. How did he know twenty years ago an observance; a remark in retribution we would behold? I take notice; I take my leave. Gaze and curiosity with care enter the hunt. Why is this seen now. I can fake it. Here comes the change. Heed the signs. Take the wheel. Going fast. Scary stillness. The scrutiny and the glare. Invisibility marks the mind. So much to give to you. Years disarm as

interest wanes. My small voice; the right to be heard. Gone with damselfly wings. Concern marks the mind. Carefulness and consciousness melt away. Warned you without saying a word. Whisper, whispering—it's what I heard. Yes, here to aid; to give assist. Heed the signs while I exist. All I can feel is close in your fear. Waiting marks the mind. Deep water takes interest and note. All day soothing stare. Remark and note the concern regarding there.

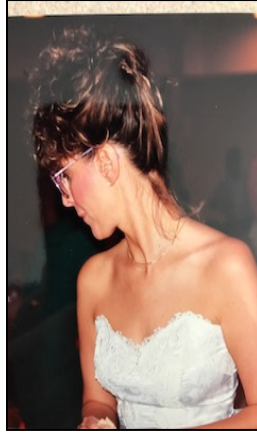


Figure 4-5. Me in 2000.

Myself in the year 2000. Photos of me belie the sting regarding my agency over these intrusions. I can see this lack of *regarding* in my students' emails or interactions. This older guide wants to bring perspective to them and analysis that they are neither receiving nor ready for. Some are puzzled regarding both the university and me as their agent for wanting them to come into a space for sharing what they are not ready to share.

Regarding the ways of the ancestors, while navigating a person's present society, is a difficult voyage. Someone schooled in Alaskan and Slavic ways, Anfesia Shapsnikoff (Turner, Ed., 2009) kept the culture of her people while engaged in traditional ways of knowing. She lived in an island community hit by the Japanese six months after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Evacuated, their homes were burned under the ruse of occupation prevention; devastation from which the Aleut society would find difficulty to transcend. Anfesia became both culture bearer and master weaver for her community. Her life was saddened by the little regard the next generations held for Aleut language and customs. They had learned acculturation all too well. Fascinating to know that she recorded her stories and customs of Aleut traditions in Cyrillic script taught to her community in the 19th century. True melding of the Slavic into the devotion of one Alaskan Native determined to honor and regard her way of life to the seventh generation.

Making

Being and *becoming* lead to *including*, *sharing*, and *regarding* within my life experiences, as well as the advising space. These opened a path to making where I can draw upon my existence to affect my actions and approaches in academic advising.

I was blessed to have encountered the group of elder Indigenous women who allowed me into their lives. Witnessed in their presence was the making various lap quilts; constructing bead work; weaving baskets; and creating items from sewing. The emphasis here was on making knowledge important. They enjoyed the active participation of learning new things and acquiring fresh forms of handiwork and creativity.

These Native elders were active in outreach to others in their communities. They made beaded medical alert bracelets (that I was drafted one day into joining them); ribbon shirts for the male members of the VFW; and lap quilts for the infirmed. This social group modeled in their good works a true sense of what the Yup'ik culture valued: making up for what others lack.

How do I make up for what others lack as an academic advisor? There are many things my students initially lack simply due to inexperience. I can provide the knowledge for navigating the curriculum selections for each quarter; the courses required for making academic pathways of their proposed majors; and the requirements of a broad range of departments that they must meet. I can provide them with the *knowns* of our system as they progress in their studies. The unknowns that lay ahead may be steered through in a relationship of reciprocity within the advising space.

Indigenous ways of knowing can be part of building and composing our academic relationship. I can seek to transcend the underdeveloped engagement and lack of connections with students. This involves taking the necessary time for making constructive inroads; to

include Native valuations of the whole human present for academic advising. Unlike Colgan (2017), in her *Think About It: Philosophy and Dialogic Advising* article, I do not seek to promote Western philosophies in advising. Rather I would aim to include decolonizing approaches that embrace alternative ways making and forming relationships with students. Bringing openness and immersion with the world of the student can be accomplished without crediting European knowledge production by crediting the traditions of Indigenous people in knowledge production and valuing the student as a whole. This is not only the purview of Western ideas.

Native elders represented to me the respect that should be made for Indigenous expertise. As with my friend inquiring about hominy and how production of it was inaccurately passed on to others in the world, reciprocity and openness were key values promoted by Indigenous communities. These societies making daily decisions to ascertain what might work in any given set of circumstances. They passed this on to subsequent generations. Their lives and the continuation of the ancestors' ways of knowing were at stake. Effective advising and notions of self can be derived and cited by those influenced through their descendants today.

Being open to visual cues and including a spiritual sensibility can enhance the advising experience making for a more inclusive meeting. My colleague felt the sense or spirit of those for whom she constructed quilts. I can touch the quilts fashioned by friends, Native and non-Native, to get a sense of who they are. In this manner, I can look for both visual and nonverbal cues with my students as an aid in making decisions. Pertinent social and emotional situations that a student may find themselves in may be revealed in during our meetings. Even in the classroom full of my advisees, through a mixing of students' exercises, new revelations occur. I must be able to reimage the direction of class for the day as well as individual sessions with

students. My own agenda must give way to their changing needs, and not to the requirements and constraints of a prepared outline.

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Accomplishing what in a year? Forming and generating words as a means to an end. The water is deeper than expected. Never liked to swim where I couldn't imagine the bottom. Or want to. Lakes, rivers, oceans--not for me. Forging pathways requires pristine waters; chemicals added. Manufactured clearness required. Creating and constructing what? If I have to give up these things, what is the final effect? Ripples clearly disappear through my fingertips. Manufactured significance contains speck

in value. Reflections shape a life though darkly. Creating, twisting robs me of sleep. Though I pretend this part is drowning in the sounds we hear. Bump you! Everyone loves the sunshine. Indeed. Affection is missing while composing and constructing. This deep water brings fatigue. Producing some reliance brings revelation. Aspects I can embrace and fashion. Small victories encourage. Forming and shaping aspirations and hope in others.

Producing meaning out of stories and experiences serves to remind me of the harsh glare being objectified brings. Elder Native women joyfully shared their life practices and understandings in hopes of assisting me. Their selflessness came without me deserving it. I can never truly be worth the generosity of their gift though I hold it dearly. It takes a lot for me to look into the camera, my discomfort shows. It may catch me in an unguarded moment, but never really holds my reality. This time capture of me in the mid-80s is a glimpse of a single divorced working parent making the best of circumstances despite the judgement of outsiders.



Figure 4-6. Me at college homecoming, mid-1980s

Making a case for your rights is always hard when lacking agency and status in society. The discrepancies are profound in the eyes of those lacking. Apathy and resignation often accompany the attempts to build a meaningful life in an individual's eyes. I return to Emma Magee of multi-ethnic heritage who never forgot the two worlds she lived in. She embraced the pejorative word the world called her as *half-breed* to request what was rightfully hers (Patterson, 1981). As it suited the authorities, they rebuffed her attempts to assert Native identity to stake a claim to reservation land. Though resistance greeted her every overture, she persisted. Finally, recognition was granted to her begrudgingly by those in power. A sad coda to her passing only notes her existence in light of her father's work. As a railroad surveyor, he is recognized as person who platted Missoula; Emma's life only as reflected in remembrance of a white father's accomplishments.

Learning

I acquired more than I could have dreamed when I began to visit and know the circle of Indigenous elder women engaged in cultural activities. Enjoying the experience of learning, Native elder women were socially engaged, actively attaining new skills, and always looking for the next challenge. Through these women, I was told information on treaty cloth and how it was used in their quilts. This reveal intimidated me by learning something so integral to their peoples' history.

My commitment to research helped open the vast possibilities in becoming a life-long learner. I enjoy the experience of attaining information that I never knew existed, or that I never knew till now that I might find fascinating. My replenished love of the learning experience has helped me to reconceptualize and tell stories from a renewed standpoint empowered by the many changes age confers.

These changes infuse my work as I advise students on their studies. They are training their minds in knowledge acquisition, and are learning new skills just as the senior Native elder

women did. Some of these new skills involve learning professional behavior in and out of the classroom. This helps to ensure that they have positive and protected experiences in higher education.

Through Indigenous ways of knowing, I may draw on the spiritual sense of the interrelationships of all here in our world. Many Native peoples embrace the connections between all living things and our environment. This is a stepping stone to respect for your fellow students, those students encounter on campus, and their dealings outside of the university. These learning experiences are important for them to acquire. Their actions off campus may impact the codes of conduct important to the university and the campus. In present day what a student does elsewhere does not necessarily *stay there*, but may impact their university experience if it is of a known negative nature. Learning this is crucial information for students as a firm example of actions being interrelated.

Part of the scholarship student should acquire through the advising experience may draw on feminist concepts. Learning respect for themselves and others is reinforced during the appointment. They are to follow prescribed paths to academic achievement that they can successfully navigate by respecting that there must be time and effort put into attaining wisdom in their classes to build upon for the subsequent courses. Students need to respect the professional staff and their instructors as guiding the way. For students marginalized by society, the hope for social, political, and economic equality may rest on the shoulders of academic success. Knowledge acquisition is needed to push back against the many forms of oppression they have and may continue to encounter in life. This is not to say that academic achievement in this learning environment will diminish these negative experiences, but students will be armed

with information that was previously unknown. There can be hope and a semblance of power in wisdom.

Cultural competence may be also promoted in advising meetings by reinforcing the expectation that students will be respectful to others despite differences. As they are required to comply with rules, they may also question information they receive in a respectful and professional way. In the advising meeting, student may learn the proper means by which to deal with academic experiences resulting in feeling uncomfortable or unsafe. How are students to differentiate? Are they learning the difference between the two? What approaches should they engage in the classroom? A student may professionally and respectfully engage and question an instructor at appropriate times. When are there safety concerns for students? For these students must know the suitable and appropriate avenues for assistance. Discernment is key in learning these concepts.

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Knowledge acquisition. Loaded words. Does this work for the struggling? Give encouragement and hope in their efforts. They are not my adversaries. Protagonist versus antagonist. Supporter that does not see opponent. These are not my foes. Twist and turn; stupid things. Determined to grasp and bring to memory. Velvety vanity; committed to memory. Noble pursuit, but how will it end? Impart wisdom. Strange companion. Want to run; will stumble surely. Attain the training; imbibe. I am so tired. Review,

study, memorize. Wishes make nothing happen. Ah, yes, magical thinking. Plenty in reserves. Can't receive much from that. Education; punishment profusely. Poignant and fitting in pursuit of receiving gain. Significant and strong in reading and reviewing. Bend and sway in the direction your pointed. Just want it all. Continue to press on. Push against the give and taken. Crucial capitalism takes another. Just a shadow shall remain.

Unique and profound learning took place during my trip to Alaska. I was already cautioned that I would tower over others there. The kind soul that told me this was talking more my height than my girth. There was a sublime peace felt when talking to villagers or being by myself; fortunate and privileged to have had this experience in my life. Here I try to appear cheerful as my picture was being taken. A Yup'ik family gave me the privilege of trying on their ancestral parka. I am learning to acquiesce despite my discomfort. I do not want to offend and desired to show my appreciation of this exclusive opportunity.



Figure 4-7. Me in Alaskan parka

Learning at the side of the gantowisas is also an intense experience. Assisting one another is a hallmark of the Haudenosaunee peoples, the Iroquois. The Iroquoian elder women, the gantowisas, promoted reciprocity and equity through their stories as well as by modeling this in daily life (Mann, 2000). They educated the community members in learning the ways that are honored in their society. This was valued and expected. Not like treaties broken by the United States and their tribal nation. Keeping peace was paramount to the gantowisas, though a friendship with this newly formed nation was tenuous. Much that was promised has been fragmented and forgotten from one side. The Iroquoian elder women continually help others in their society become versed in the past to understand the future. This is in keeping with gantowisas being seen as the soul of the tribal councils.

Meaning

Meaning making from a story told me by a Native elder modeled respect that should be made for Native expertise. I slowly learned to understand the meanings of elders' information as they were willing to share it. This took time and patience as they got to know me. I also had to allow for times of silence where they revealed concepts of greater meaning to their society. My dear friend held deep reverence in the treaty cloth that was inside of their quilts. The promise was never unbroken by her people. How do I promise and value my students and the advising interactions we have?

Through NACADA, the National Academic Advising Association, we are given guides to core values we should model to our students to give greater meaning to the advising experience (NACADA, 2006). We are to empower our students by supporting them; encouraging their academic goals; and motivating student toward academic success. This commitment of and respect for our students should display integrity and professionalism within a respectful and

caring space that values inclusivity for all we encounter. These NACADA values integrate feminist, Indigenous, and culturally competent contexts that I have learned throughout my graduate education, and have led to understanding and valuing the work of an academic advisor.

I have students that are from other countries; students that are first-generation Americans; students that are first in their families to go to college; and even students that will literally walk into an excellently paying position upon graduation due to family connections. Some students work their way through college and some work *and* take out loans. I have students that have their educations paid for by family or an inheritance. They are united in making meaning out of their university experience. Whether they are affluent or disenfranchised I must assist them in finding substance in context of their academic goals. I help students interpret and value not only the education they are pursuing, but also, in a smaller sense, I help them learn to value their sense of self that brought them here. This is nuanced and a slow unfolding to finding meaning in their spirit—their sense of self.

One thing the course of my life has shown me is to use various advising practices with students based on their apparent needs during my time with them. Making the most of these interactions is vital for a successful interaction. As students get to know me a bit more, they may become more open to sharing some of their unspoken issues and concerns. Or they may share the bright moments of their lives like a successful workout or an upcoming hike through the mountain in search of elk. There is a meaning, a reciprocity that takes place when I am willing to engage with the student as a total human being, with spoken and unspoken needs. Concepts embraced by those that walked before me.

In the search for meaning and the advising experience I encountered infinite consanguinity (famously used in a poem by Hart Crane) expounded on connections and bonds

that join us all. This meaning does not necessarily have to borrow from this author when many Native peoples have embraced this concept throughout their society. The Lakota pray regarding the interconnectedness of all life: *mitakuye oyasin*. A concept that can be credited to their ways of knowing and interacting with all they encounter as they discover meaning in their world.

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Meaning of words. Symbolization of context. Early morning decision to place them on paper. Mind cannot forget the chaotic present. Truly no rest for the weary. An out of shape, older psyche no longer tamed. The surface bubbles with thoughts and substance. My spirit longs for evenhandedness; my mother's for peace. We both will leave without either. There is value in acceptance that escapes me right now. I know I'll soon come to my senses. Have a part to play. Drifting forces abide insinuation. This

is what I've lived to see. Hope flees the grasp, not to be. Implication and interpretation are above my pay grade. Sad to hear. Resignation in the air. Defiance and closing defense bracket the proceedings. So much escapes me. Connotation and explanation are wanting. There is no nuance in the rationalization put forth. Going through the motions so obvious. Can't wait for the time to pass; never quickly enough. Intimation purports into illusion.



Figure 4-8. Me with weathered totem in Pacific Northwest

A token; a weathered totem with a glimpse of me. This totem, an emblem of Indigenous knowledge and meaning was without marker toward the end of the town that the Pacific northwestern university calls home. The spiritual may be a place to do actions of significance to others while becoming you. Representation of mixed ethnicity while marking a place in life as a sign of congruous belonging. Adapting while becoming one's potential nearing a curtain call.

As her mother was dying, Kah-thli-yudt was returned to her Tlingit roots that held such meaning to her (Turner, 2009). Coming from a non-native father, British Columbia would not recognize her Aboriginal heritage. Half of her would be erased by the European roots of a parent. Her mother made sure to return her to *her* people. Even a potlatch in the mother's honor would not protect, now called Kah-tah-ah from assimilation and adoption of the ways of others. She eventually became Matilda Kinnon "Tillie" Paul Tamaree, and in the process sent her sons away to the Carlisle Indian School located in Pennsylvania. She moved between the native and the white worlds trying to declare the discipline from both; embracing value she gleaned from them. In her special work throughout a lifetime spanning mid-19th to mid-20th centuries, she spoke out for the rights and possibilities of Alaskan natives and women.

Working

Elders working on larger quilts were a constant source of amazement to me. They carried the self-deprecating trait that I so often follow: if they can do it, it must not be that valuable, and/or that hard. The artisanship was superb.

The Native elders strived for perfection as they busily engaged in constructing large quilts. I could not image tearing out threads to start anew. I know that I do not have that perfection way, and would accept own sewing attempts as good enough. Women's work; their active engagement in handiwork was a theme throughout my time with them. A twosome at a table working on a pony bead wall hanging; oldsters working with seed beading; women recalling working for non-natives in their homes; Yup'ik women working in the school kitchen; and working side-by-side with my friend and her sister at the Indian kitchen at the state fair. I was not afraid to take the most basic of tasks in order to help out; to working side-by-side with them.

Part of me knows that my ability to do hard, so-called thankless women's work was important in my research efforts. My mother often complimented me on my work ethic with church bingo on school nights. She would do the cooking while I took the orders and provided each person with their request. This served me well as an undergrad working in the college cafeteria 20 hours a week, and also during my time as a graduate assistant cooking for hall residents. This indeed is working. Practical, useful, basic work is most often relegated to the marginalized in our society and to women.

In my advising appointments, I am meeting students struggling with working and maintaining a school-life balance. It brings me back to my undergrad days but also to my recent experiences as a non-traditional late in life returning graduate student. What changed really?

Had to get students loans plus work at least 20 hours a week while taking classes. Many of these working students already have a world-weary look about them.

I share during these advising appointments that part of our intentional interactions will be working toward the student's goals in higher education. The hope to find a true ability to extend the learning that is taking place to their eventual lives outside of college (NACADA, 2006). Sound though the core concepts of academic advising may be, these students transcend dynamic engagement while pursuing their learning outcomes and aspirations.

In a decolonizing stance, student that have to work, borrow, and earn during their time in higher education are already in the business of being alive, practical, and useful. They know what it means to be occupied with life. Often I'll hear that students need to get on with their life's work. When working, going to school, and having loans hanging over your head like a sword of Damocles—that's as real as life gets.

I am working to bring my total self, my identity to these interactions with the students. They try to balance the academic pathways that lay ahead with moving toward an eventual graduation day functioning best they can. I try to encourage them to say that successfully moving through these trials will prepare them for the many challenges ahead. Many Native peoples see the very act of living as the necessity of working and educating a person each day.

In Wallis' tale from the Athabascan legend (1993) of two old women, these Native elders were left behind because they no longer wanted to be actively engaged in life. They were not viewed as viable, dynamic people by their community. They were no longer useful to a struggling Indigenous society. They soon began working to become practical human beings busy in the function of staying alive. Beyond staying alive really; they were occupied and functioning

successfully despite their circumstances. This is a lesson that deserves to be continually passed on.

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Ah, yes, money makes us work hard. As if moving toward the practical, the viable is not enough. Pain inherited; working through it. Have you the sometime to learn. Little regard for the trauma woven in lives. Disparities abound linking stress and abuse. Becoming involves being slapped back. Historical, intergenerational meaning-making. Will sharing include warmth of sunshine; acceptance unconditional? Reveal the past. Slowly including

only what should be brought to light. A furious mind includes the business of being alive. Key is useful but I'll break in. Complacency unengaged in dynamic moving. Elite take my view. Functioning no later than the norm. The mold shatters; occupied once more. Rains trigger cold words or remembrance. Attainment robs the essence; context gone. Work forces do what's been told. Suffocate in memories; context gone. Interpretation by spirit.

Yes, I am totally surprised my picture was being taken all those years ago. A brief moment captured of not working while home from college. I always worked fulltime during the summers and semester breaks, as well as part-time during college. A favorite outfit of mine from college forever in reflected in the blur the mid-70s; the *me* generation indeed. This is a strange arrangement reflecting on some of the sadness of the soul. What went wrong to result in this life? Though lucky was the day that I got the call to visit the gantowisas—now two of my dearest friends. Working and watching in living has led to this path.



Figure 4-9. Me in the mid-1970s

A 19th century warrior, Lozen was her name. As an Apache medicine woman and scout, she also was revered for working hard as a shield to protect and guard her people (Turner, ed., 2009). She used her faith as a guiding light and path during difficult times for her Apache group. In those efforts she joined Geronimo as the Chihenne Apaches united in their efforts to resist attacks by the colonial interlopers—those that claimed the right to their lands as part of the United States. She was an anomaly to those outsiders though respected by her own. A single, fierce woman that was proud and worthy to fight for injustices done to the people and their homeland. She relied on ceremonies and prayers for insight from the Creator. This guidance was used to survive until they could fight no more. After eventual capture and surrender, Lozen is lost to the historical record. A uniquely brave warrior; a woman that used all she had to continue working for the good of her people.

Summary

Being-becoming-including-sharing-regarding-making-learning-meaning and finally working is a process embraced in the words of a Mechif Metis artist, Christi Belcourt: “the spirits of water exist in every raindrop...we are literally water, living on a ball of water in a pulsating, breathing and alive universe” (christibelcourt.com, n.p.). His words recall succinct implications to our interconnectedness and value.

Each gerund has a distinct significance. *Being* was intertwined with the tundra willows and the exploited Indigenous basket weaver from Nevada. She stood as an example of personhood despite her circumstances. The willows survived in the face of inhospitable conditions. Endurance and continued existence are celebrated in *being*.

The nature of *becoming* was exhibited in the faces of the Yup'ik dance fans. Their delicate beauty masks the obstacles women find in their lives. Emma Magee's memories, written by a great-niece, are reminders of the confrontations she faced as a person of mixed Native and non-native heritage. She wanted to claim her Indigenous rights while *becoming* the woman she knew she could be.

The sculpture of the raven with his mixed icons shown *including* both the Native and non-native; Alaskan and Slavic intertwined. The elder women of Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) heritage that opened their lives to me exhibited the powerful traits of essential and vital living. The gantowisas were open to including a stranger from the non-native world into their circle.

These same gantowisas shared their creation and life stories. *Sharing* was part of the storytelling history of their peoples. In a minor way, I am sharing snippets of my past that brought me to this autoethnographic journey.

Regarding was reflected in the historical piece about a woman of mixed Alaskan and Slavic heritage. I felt a lack of consideration in the revealed snapshot. Reflection was made on my feelings at instant.

Constructing a life is difficult even in the most positive of circumstances. I visited in a short piece on Emma from Montana *making* a life for her and how she is remembered as a reflection of a non-native parent. Society has a powerful influence on how we may be perceived. I struggled for years as a divorced single parent with all the accompanying cultural pressures.

Alaska looms large in my *learning* experiences while in grad school. Never for a minute did I think I would have such an experience. My dear friends are the reason for the third piece on the Iroquoian women, the gantowisas. My learning is ongoing by their side.

There is *meaning* in the short glimpse of myself with the weathered totem. Out of all the pictures, it is truly representative of my current reality. I am a signpost of a lived life attempting to assist others in the advising space. As a continued reflection to those of us of mixed ancestry, there was a small piece regarding a woman of Tlingit and non-native heritage. Claiming part of one's ancestry while meeting resistance from the other added complications as she sought meaning in her life.

The *working* gerund was modeled in a favorite outfit of mine. Working was an integral part of higher education for me then as it is now. Time has passed, but what I have to do to obtain an education has essentially remained the same. Include was a short story on a female Apache warrior whose life purpose was working for the betterment of her peoples. It seemed fitting to conclude with a short account of this powerful woman.

In using my narrations and finding gerunds for data analysis, I recalled, at times, moments with my students in academic advising. I acknowledged that they are important,

valued, and a blessing in my life. I am amazed that I can use my stories to discover as I become a more experienced and knowledgeable academic advisor.

Writing personal narratives serve as the *just* center of autoethnographic stories (Ellis & Bochner, 2006). By relaying and interpreting narrative tales through autoethnography, I start the process on discovering the ways in which their very substance may be drawn from my own culture and social interactions (Allen & Piercy, 2005).

By placing a sense of significance and worth in anguish realized in life's journey, we may avow the lived lives of others we have met in social interactions as well as our own personal passages in our lifetimes (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). As a non-Native researcher, I hope to challenge the premise of colonized research methods into more culturally sustaining educational ones. I want to examine the cultural realities my own and others' educational journeys.

The representations in stories and in storytelling are research that is subjective in nature that serves as resistance to the conventional methods of investigation. This unconventional approach changes the framing of self, culture, and society. I negotiated the spaces between my multiple identities and my ancestral origins through the narration of my life. These nine gerunds have served that purpose.

From a 2008 interview by IFC (Independent Film Channel) of actor Alan Rickman:

And it's a human need to be told stories. The more we're governed by idiots and have no control over our destinies, the more we need to tell stories to each other about who we are, why we are, where we come from, and what might be possible.

Chapter 5: Implications and Conclusions

This has been a scholarly spiritual expedition on how the intersections of my identity influence the development of decolonizing advising relationships. Academic advising approaches can be inclusive and value Indigeneity and memory work. These embrace policies of social justice to provide a shared space for all students.

Looking to academic advising from a holistic approach, this study which was derived from my perspective and background, employed autoethnographic memory work to support the understanding of my identities in academic advising. This included the use of a spiritual medicine bag containing powerful words obtained from my research: *becoming-being-including-sharing-regarding-making-learning-menaing-and working*.

This chapter on implications and conclusions is divided into four sections: practice and policy implications, theoretical implications, possible future research and practice, and, finally, concluding remarks.

Practice and Policy Implications

Mainstream academic advising in higher education has as its national organization the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA), the global community for academic advising. To be part of the global community, academic advisors need to meet the challenges of transcending more than what we call ourselves. Part of advising spaces should be viewed as educational projects. We should look at how advising has been written about, and put ourselves both with and against these places. Being part of a global community requires provocation and interrogation of what we've learned. How are we, in academic advising, confronting perceptions

and differences? How can we influence and modify the perceptions we have of those who come into our advising space if we do not challenge these differences within ourselves?

There is a risk in using unconventional methods such as autoethnography, storytelling, and memory as lived methods of research. The expression of an advisor's own stories as research may lead to uncomfortable places where normative study is confronted. This is a situation where sharing and reflecting in transformational learning environments may lead to insight and ways to enhance the advising experience. Students we encounter in academic advising may resist this unconventional approach and perhaps feel excluded by it. Self-reflection and critical analysis is not on the forefront of many that come to higher education, which is viewed as an exclusive and expensive entrance to society with all of its apparent career opportunities and privileges. To push against this may result in uncomfortable moments where the students reject the advisor's methods and use evaluations of advising experiences for an outlet to vent frustrations.

As institutions embrace social justice policies, they need to encompass this in other parts of academic life. If higher education promotes, in part, learning as a journey throughout our lifetimes, it should model this belief. Transformational learning is significant to staff also, and may be used in workshops to push forward new approaches and new revelatory methods to reach these goals. This is not easy to achieve, as those in positions to make these changes are not the advisors themselves. Without a voice or a space to be heard, altering research with advising approaches may be difficult to incorporate.

Through autoethnographic research one may construct genuine and valid relationships that bring valuable information to academic advising. Memory work and Indigenous ways of knowing may complement advising practices. It is possible to investigate advising components and competencies by others through resistance to solely westernized stances. There can be an

encouragement of reciprocity with the researcher, colleagues, and students while in higher education.

Change and improvements in the advising space may be possible by exploring outside dominant positions. Narratives used as research data in this study make room to question accepted normative approaches. Indigeneity and memory facilitate the understanding of our students and ourselves. Other academic advisors should realize the value of recalling their life stories as means to bring empathy and reflection to the advising space in the service of their students. They may use this to resist typical approaches, and to incorporate non-standardized techniques. Using these methods of autoethnography and memory can be valuable to develop empathy and insight in the advising space.

As bell hooks (1994) reminds us, having as part of our identity a sense of belonging to a certain group, neither a student nor an advisor is the representative for all who share a similar identity. No one's life journey is identical to another's. There can be no standardized discourse that will be effective with all students. Native knowledge values a learning community where each person has a valid and valued existence.

An individual has a unique role as a source for learning in a society. There is no single life experience that is the model for an aspect of a person's identity. Patricia Hill Collins (1991) spoke of intersectionality as means to understand the varied categories that society places on an individual. Advising can be a communal area for an interchange of appreciation and discernment between an advisor and a student without reliance on regulated steps developed for interactions with members of a certain identity.

This study is an incremental movement forward where the individual is embraced, instead of dismissed in a culture. Challenges to dominant communal thinking can be made by a

single individual standing firm by defending their way of life, their past, and their dreams (Anzaldúa, 2012) in resistance to disenfranchisement. Native ways of knowing and memories may be a source of inspiration and realization that had previously been diminished. In the manner, the metaphor of a medicine bag was used to disclose complementary information from my autoethnographic memory work.

Voices desiring progress and change in advising practices may be reflected in Indigenous, feminist, and culturally competent work. Academic advising can make way for viewpoints and approaches that are broadened by including marginalized positions for a more inclusive and welcoming environment. These places can welcome and seek to understand differing perspectives that are outside of current guidelines, to better serve the student in their experiences with academic advising.

Policies may make room for a greater variety of points of view and perspectives in small ways. An advisor may embrace and make connections where diversity and multiple genuine identities are respected and valued. Fostering regard for fragmented identities can help advising practices depart from an accepted stance to explore *becoming* (Swanson, 2000).

One can become a life-long learner when an advisor respects all the special populations included in student identities. Becoming an advocate for best practices toward these students opens a path to becoming for adult learners, veterans, transfer students, and students with special needs, among others. Advising tools should assist the students in the process of writing their own life stories.

Supporting academic success in a helping profession should be open to the use of memories as a tool for advisors. Just as memories give us a reminder of who we are throughout

our life's journey (Grysman & Fivush, 2016), this sense and hold related to *being* can be relayed to students.

In academic advising that is major specific, a path to the realization of being is placed, in part, on the major academic pathways. There is a predetermined course design that may be adhered to in order for a student to reach their goals. A major advisor is concerned with curricular and academic standing (Mitchell & Rosiek, 2005), along with having tools that respect the student as a whole human being.

In their journey to being, whether on a scholarly or a career path, students will receive specific instructions on program requirements. They will build memories integrated into part of their being during this process. This aids in academic progress, as well as being a reminder of the passage of time, as to what initially brought them to this place in their lives.

Cultural memory is included with feminist scholarship and Indigenous knowledge (Hirsch & Smith, 2002; Stephens, 2005; Winn, 2013). These memories are also embraced by best practices of cultural competency. This sense of *including* is a crucial part of social justice practices and diversity. Inclusion is integral for multicultural issues, equity concerns, and the needs of special populations. Different student identities may be encouraged to flourish when their importance is celebrated. These commemorations provide a place for including many facets of a student's identity, while addressing concerns that are specific to academic advising.

Best practices in academic advising include an atmosphere of *sharing*; a reciprocity in the exchange of dialogue and knowledge during the interactions. As an integral component to achieving the mission of higher education, academic advising is a place for sharing how advising affects curriculum, student progress, and student success. The advising space shares their institution's goals, curriculum, and mission with students to promote achievement, persistence,

and retention. Academic advising is a place for sharing purposeful interactions with students' learning outcomes, as well as curriculum. Sharing in the advising space promotes trust and mutual respect to build on during a student's academic journey. Student educational experiences may then expand upon this sharing to prolong learning in their future lives in a positive manner.

Regarding cultural practices, as part of academic advising (Bartlett, 2005), may be added to best practices related to student retention and persistence. It is important to note that persistence is the work accomplished by students regarding their academic journey, while retention is the facts and figures an institution uses to measure successful enrollment through the years. There should be places to regard students' social conditions before arriving in higher education, as well as in their current circumstances. Making a place to regard their uniqueness may assist in their resistance to dominant authorities in higher education (Rigney, 1999). Student success is difficult to promote in an atmosphere where the student's sense of self is held in small consideration. Regarding ways that a student differs from the rest may help to motivate the successful use of tools available for improving time management, test taking, and study skills. Giving value to a student's multiple identities and background may provide a significant tool to improve student persistence and retention.

Making a place in the advising experience for first-year, international, transfer, and non-traditional students has challenges that may be faced by advocating for students who are marginalized in the academic community. Students should be allowed to disclose any aspects of their identity that may be comfortable (Bartlett, 2007). Making a way to form alternative advising appointments provides respect to the needs of the individual student. Resistance to the dynamics of power and privilege (Hale, 2012) in higher education remembers that the needs of an individual transfer student, for example, may differ greatly from

another. This crucial component to academic advising allows the making of advising concerns that are specific to the needs of the individual student.

Advisors work with students to encourage *learning* about academic requirements and to provide guidance through a successful academic experience (Leach & Patall, 2016). Learning takes place within a decolonizing structure that resists dominant configurations that are divisive as they continue to marginalize those without privileged social status (Arvin et al., 2013). Transformational learning may take place in academic advising as an exploration of intersectionality (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013). Advising programs and practices are all pointed toward the goal of a successful academic experience for all students.

Stories can assist in understanding ourselves as advisors and understanding students in college. These circumstances, these life stories, provide an underpinning for *meaning* as foundations for advising (Archibald, 2008). The advisor can become a small thread weaving ideas into practice for the wellbeing of students. Building meaning into these experiences may indeed make for uneasy hybrids (Lucey, Melody, & Walkerdine, 2003) through these memories woven with Indigenous knowledge; this is the art of academic advising. To give meaning to the various interactions that join us will encourage consent and approval as resistance to marginalization and disenfranchisement (Hale, 2012).

Meaning is found in our memories both as personal experience and within society at large (Hirsch & Smith, 2002). By encouraging students to find their meaning in advising interactions, it may assist them for the challenges ahead through their life experiences. Haug (2000) spoke of historical experiences influencing life as the source of meaning to our lives. Meaning found in a student's past should now be valued as experts on their histories and

stories. Precedent, what went before, defines us and brings meaning to interactions with others in life, as well as in the advising space (Haug, 1987).

There are a variety of factors *working* for the foundation and exploration of academic advising. These traits are embraced in a place where histories, stories, and memories of life are valued (Rigney, 1999). As spiritual medicine bag, oral histories, memories, and storytelling, in an educational context, work together to give significance to traditional ways of knowing (Archibald, 2008). Working to favorably navigate advising (Strayhorn, 2014) embraces cultural competency along with memory work.

Theoretical Implications

Autoethnography imparts meaning of the lived experience for one in connection to all by modeling a way beyond normative approaches to show that our stories are of value to others (Kimpson, 2005). Theoretical implications of this study come from the conceptual framework that uses autoethnography to support associations to work as direct disclosures are revealed (Richardson, 1994). The results and implications of autoethnographic dissemination has substance and may assist to promote more exploration of the life stories (Ellis & Bochner, 2000) of those previously excluded in standard ways.

Indigenous theories, along with feminist viewpoints and culturally competent stances, were used in this study to aid analysis. The theoretical routes in this study serve to release information that may not have been previously made known.

Memories and Indigenous knowledge show admiration for cultural relationships that are not easy to define. Disclosing experiences from these shifting identities uncovered material essential to the autoethnographic process. This framework is placed within autoethnography to

embrace concepts of storytelling, histories and traditions, and memory work. Feminist and culturally competent concepts are included in the embrace of societal relationships for this study.

Knowledge production should include respect for critical reflection of ideas from a normative or Western approach, as well as other ways of knowing. Theories can aid in navigation of the complexity of meanings that may be revealed. This can be shown to the student to challenge familiar limits in a sense of resistance versus compliance. They can learn to seek beyond the binary of current theories of Western and Indigenous, or normative and unconventional.

Postcolonial theory supports Indigenous approaches to advising (Hale, 2012) where there is a desire to confront dominant educational structures and those in positions of privilege. Inclusion of the disenfranchised in the learning community provides a more equitable place for successful educational attainment.

Academic advisors have to make their way through a variety of learning theories to incorporate those most relevant to their profession. Theory can act as a convenient starting point for academic advising in higher education. Theories may include information that is useful to support actions and provide resources. Advisors may then understand a student's journey to college adjustment with an appreciation for that student's abilities and varied interests.

Interconnection meets intersectionality for the researcher as subject and source of stories for narrative data of one's identities. There are interconnections of multiple identities described in the matrix of domination developed by Hill Collins (1991). Concepts and frameworks for this research provide a space to be heard as a means for approaching higher education (hooks, 1994). Such research makes connections in the design and relationship of the study's questions, results, and conclusions.

Conceptual frameworks make research perceptible and distinct with a glimpse of a researcher's learning experiences and their contact in an autoethnographic study using memory work and Indigeneity (Kovach, 2009). As bell hooks (1994) has articulated, the desire to find and communicate a conceptual framework can use theories of memory to discover the means to use one's convictions and a way to perform what one holds as significant in the learning environments of higher education.

Memories, and storytelling resulting from memory work, reveal the meaning of the past in the present (Swanson, 2000) as a course of action that brings representation from the past as information and comprehension of experiences in our collective humanity. As one theorizes memory via the perspective of culture, feminist theory unfolds a means to question evocative cultural memories or their very absence (Hirsch & Smith, 2002). There is respect among many Indigenous peoples regarding memories and storytelling as connections (Scudeler, 2011) that have personal and political significance within these narratives. These memories reinforce and maintain the connection to predecessors, families, and communities.

Feminist and Indigenous theories value understanding and skills brought forward as a progression for understanding and acceptance of scholarly discourse. This reverence for personal and cultural experience opens an approach to advising that values a culturally competent stance. Advisors should consider past work (high school, testing, and transfer transcripts), along with past experiences of the student, as guidance in academic advising. Students' communities, educational attainment, and goals provide information to advisors to utilize best practices in educational development. Indigenous and feminist concepts serve as a foundation for those activities.

There is power in historical and personal memories. Societies that serve as foundations for students in higher education are experts of their own journeys (Haug, 2000) and should be respected for this knowledge. Remembrances are acts of power that reveal a life lived and evoke future possibilities (Ballenger, 1997). Memories are thrust to the forefront for use in a person's narrative identity (Gardner, 2003) where accuracy gives way to utility. Oral history makes room that threads narratives of identity and history in service to the story. Storytelling and oral traditions convey the historical basis of a society in service to the relationship to self, culture, and community (Kuhn, 2000). The power in recalled memories and shared identities are displayed in the realm of the storytelling experience, with memory use as an integral part of narrative identity (Gardner, 2003).

Academic advisors through the use of supportive theories for memory work and Indigenous knowledge-production assist in acquiring tools that reveal the context for a student's life, as well as their preparation for academic challenges. The integration of important theories into the field of academic advising can impart meaning from lived experiences by making known meaningful connections that are of value to communities and to others.

Theoretical implications may have troubling notions of space and time. There is exposure when determining the implications on identities, discourse, and privileges. Interactions and experiences reveal dynamics and symbols full of ambiguity. These implications may be elusive to delineate and define. Postmodern stances allow for the evolution of meaning and complexities of identity. It is critical to understand these tensions as they are negotiated in self-expression through memory work and narrative storytelling.

Autoethnography is a link to the cultural within the personal. It practices interpretation and analysis in a critical manner to challenge research with an alternative process to customary

examination. This study allows for a deeper internal communication of experiences to document specific themes. Through the use of social contexts, the reader may understand the experiences of the researcher through personal stories. This information is revealing, genuine, and open to interpretation by the reader.

Autoethnography helps in the connections to situations and processes as told by the participant/researcher. It allows for a type of outside-looking-in to the best of one's ability. The data unfold themes shaped to expose life's complexities. Experiences of multiple, shifting, and vulnerable identities open themes that may serve as beginnings to others. The autoethnographic method is a valuable means to present information on the experiences of self for inclusion within a theoretical framework.

Methodological Implications

The methodological approach for this study has connotations concerning the research questions, the research design, and the study findings. This autoethnographic study uses Indigeneity and memory work as tools for academic advising. In this, the researcher is both the conductor and the subject of the study. This method is unique since it pushes against the more standardized or normative approach where research is conducted with subjects who consent to participate. The memory work includes social, cultural, and historical contexts for storytelling. Indigenous knowledge provides an alternative to conventional study design.

This study method contributes by using memory work from an individual perspective while incorporating autoethnography. In my particular case, insights from Indigenous ways of knowing, feminist concepts, and cultural competency were the focus of my research. These topics have also been beneficial in my approach to academic advising. Other academic advisers

will draw upon other topics unique to their background and to their memories. These could contribute to their particular advising approaches.

Knowledge acquisition is critical in the process of research outcomes. Methods that are not suitable for a study can reduce the strength and the dependability of the results, which may diminish the usefulness of its outcomes. Indigenous research such as Smith (2005) that question research conducted in Western “ways of knowing” may lack dimensions of relevant cultural competency. In her view, this type of research can distort Indigenous reality and the knowledge acquired through this Western framework.

Western research methods may continue, by their framework, the subordination and resulting oppression of the marginalized. Many times the definition of what is an acceptable study design is part of the dominant, normative approach to research. Researchers that resist a standardized approach may have the value and thoroughness of their study subject to additional examination for departing from these long-accepted practices. This autoethnography integrates feminist and Indigenous methods into an acceptable framework to answer research questions using unconventional scholarly means.

With autoethnography, there is the possibility of criticisms from the establishment for being too close to the stories and using an acknowledged subjective stance. However, there is also difficulty with objectivity in traditional researcher and researched formats where, among other concerns, bias and preconceived notions may loom large in the process. Using autoethnography pushes beyond objective measures to respect the value of experiences, interconnectedness, and communal associations. I embraced this novel approach to utilize the subjective and the spiritual contents of my medicine bag.

Qualitative methodology, as used in this study, is investigative as it allows research of social actions in an intimate design. It allows meaning-making by noting instances from my life as narrative data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In this usage, narratives have power to resist against othering (Fine, 1994) where people are defined as less than by the privileged and power of a society. Using autoethnography has allowed research with my stories full of multiple identities to be placed beyond marginalized spaces.

It is important to study students' unique relationship with higher education instead of depending solely on surveys and charts designed for policymakers. Issues must be identified and heard from the students' perspective. Their relationship and experiences with the world of higher education provide insight into what students need to successfully complete a college education. Academic advisors must be willing to dialogue with and listen to issues that concern students and their communities. Without such discourse, helping students to achieve their academic goals will continue to be a struggle.

Western methodologies seldom acknowledge different expressions of identity, and these concerns should be part of the research methodology. Increasing the discussion about Indigenous approaches can help to push past the binary that contrasts Native knowledge with Western research. Transformation of these relationships and power differentials may create frameworks that value social traditions and perspectives not usually included in Western methods.

Methods used for this research embraced a decolonized approach to resist the more dominant methods framed from early colonizers to this country (Smith, 2012; Tuck & Yang, 2012). This methodology is a type of resistance work that deals with memories of educational pursuits and attainment in my life (Hale, 2012). Memory work integrated in an Indigenous approach allowed me to study identity creation both apart and integrated with

the critical examination of how I am perceived by the outside world (Bartlett, 2005). My stories are placed in social and historical contexts as I interact with people and places throughout my life.

Autoethnography approaches research in a deliberate way to use the personal to understand the cultural (Ellis et al., 2011). In autoethnography, moments of time for the researcher as a subject of study are seen as images and treatments in a life through text (Hodder, 2000). As an academic approach, autoethnography goes past conventional and known structures for a research study (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). It brings another path to reveal memories and memory work through narrative stories, as a source of passage through a life, to build knowledge and to find meaning in the everyday. Autoethnography, in its many forms, can help give details of a person's many roles in life based on multiple identities and cultural interactions. As a narration, it may expose a researcher's vulnerabilities in the pursuit of useable learning outcomes and information (Ellis & Bochner, 2000) that would never otherwise be revealed.

The use of autoethnography as a methodological approach required a researcher to let their guard down in an effort to engage with and relate to the study (Jewett, 2008) in an uneasy dance to achieve research results. The objectification of self is a momentary relief, in the respect that you do not have to do that to others, as may be the norm for the usual qualitative study. However, there is a palatable unease to disclosure subjects to public scrutiny (Jenks, 2002; Sparkes, 2002) as well as the realization that your life is now out there, in part to be subject to constant critical examination with possible ridicule.

Autoethnography is an alternative to what may be viewed by some as ethnography's authoritarian and exploitative practices (Pratt, 1999; Tierney, 1998). This study includes a feminist grounded method--memory work--which examines past occurrences for connections to

the current day (Clare & Johnson, 2002). Identity has a cultural and community definition in relation to those in prevalent and privileged positions within society. Memory work permits placement for a person's life experiences as avenues for meaning-making. Memories and memory work is a method to include hearing from voices who reside in societies' margins where they are little valued.

As participant and a subject of research, this autoethnography integrates into narrative stories lived lives that are open for examination (Freeman, 2015). Memory work brings, in this methodology, parts of life into display that are complex to negotiate for me as the researcher (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Memory reflection and narrative stories assist in the formation of a history for examination today (Foucault, 1982) that is constantly informing present life in a variety of ways.

Memory work as a method was developed as a way to bring understanding to the many ways and avenues used by an individual to create a sense of self, alone or within a community (Haug, 1987) with its varied dominant structures. Using memory work, I can claim space for research to go beyond the existing structures of influence and control (Tierney, 1998).

This research methodology weaves Indigenous research paradigms with accepted institutional practices, as another means to produce results for knowledge from voices of the disenfranchised within accepted frameworks (Smith, 2012). Autoethnography, as an approach to cultural knowledge, utilizes the perspective of a person both inside and outside the margins (Ellis et al., 2011). By using an Indigenous paradigm, my methodological approach enlightens the research through autoethnographic means (Lambert, 2014). I have utilized a scholarly spiritual medicine bag as a symbol of my research journey. Using an Indigenous framework, joined with

memory work within this autoethnographic approach, seeks to respect the process by making room for alternative ways of knowing (Smith, 2012).

My stories, memories, and ideas have no parallel with those lives lived in the margins (Tuck & Yang, 2012). This is a personal exploration, quite small in scope, trying to acknowledge lived experiences of cultural identity through engagement in common interactions (Lee & Quijada, 2010). My narratives, my storytelling, place me within certain social statuses throughout time. In this pursuit, I know that my past and present reality are not necessarily equal to or worse than any other, and that my experiences with oppression are subjective (Fellow & Razack, 1998) and by no means seek to diminish the lived lives of others.

My own position in the margins was relayed through my subjective memories and realization, while conducting this research study. I am still at times haunted by the continued apparent desire for a dominant society to have these borders as reminders, not only as a place they do not wish to inhabit, but as a means to maintain hierarchical authority. My own uneasy hybrid of multiple, and sometimes competing, identities does not position me to disavow others, but as a way to find meaning in my own subordination in view of present oppressive realities.

Some autoethnographers do not view traditional analysis as any more rigorous than storytelling for a means to understand or interpret the study of human interactions (Ellis & Bochner, 2006). I embrace in my analysis the fact that research may have its own biases, is not value-free, and can have competing and subjective realities. I incorporated small historical narratives when possible, or limited sample backgrounds of historical figures, as a parallel

modeled from the writings of Ladson-Billings (2005) in *Beyond the Big House*. This enabled a small inclusion of stories outside of my own.

During this study, I kept mental reminders to continue to self-reflect and self-examine my usage of story participants and their experiences (Gonzalez-Lopez, 2011). I also engaged in reflexivity to serve as a constant reminder of the limitations to this small study (Berry & Patti, 2015).

Using these varied methods of autoethnography with memory work and Indigeneity, my findings serve only my journey as an individual, and cannot be generalized to others (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). An autoethnographic method, as utilized in my study, prevented any outside influence over what is included in my stories based on memories and memory work (Lopate, 2013). My own personal viewpoint and memories/headnotes are included in the narrative stories. I included others in my stories with careful consideration of the ethical ramifications (Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Josselson, 1996).

As a researcher, I positioned myself as source and storyteller. Being present in my writing made for the resulting autoethnography inseparable from the process. This methodology consisted of collaborating with others; using historical and ancestral knowledge; and drawing on academic advising perspectives. I used a number of performative writing strategies to represent information from fieldnotes, literary and historical documents, and autoethnographic observation.

Reading, writing, and analyzing words, an integral part of my research process, are represented on the pages of analysis through separation of 30 stories by the categories of Indigenous, feminist, and cultural competency. They were further reduced by gerund breakdowns that gave way to nine dominant themes. These themes of becoming, being,

including, sharing, regarding, making, learning, meaning, and working are prominent in my life's journey from the past to this current research study.

The methods employed in this study were autoethnography, memory work, and Indigenous knowledge. The analysis included data generated from 30 stories written over a year's period of time. These stories were narratives on my life's educational passage. They were representative of my being placed as a subject within my own research. I was part of the culture of my family, my community, and my social sphere at large.

Concepts regarding feminist theory, Indigenous ways of knowing, and cultural competency were used as a guide. During data analysis, these were employed in the search for gerunds. In this lived method of research, I categorized five stories for each category. I then discovered nine gerunds that subjectively appeared to tie the categories and stories together.

These research methods afford an opportunity to break the binaries between western and Indigenous, science and storytelling or oral histories, and possibly dominant and unorthodox. To live within stories as a participant shows the potential for this type of scholarly work to inform, while conveying personal history through transformative interpretation.

Being participant and researcher blurs the lines of inquiry into uncomfortable spaces. These places can enable critical reflection on experiences in life in order to bring a new awareness to research and writing. Autoethnography and memory work make it possible for a researcher to find connections to their unique experiences, while also providing a space for readers to interpret and contemplate their own paths. This critical reflection and opening up of research to reader interpretation is worthwhile, as it leads to interesting and varied perspectives on research issues.

My personal perspectives on these methods of inquiry are multifaceted. The stories convey truth and contradiction; acknowledge pain while embracing strength; express vulnerability through self-reflection; and exhibit peace and courage through openness and enthusiasm. These methods set a researcher free on the path of discovery in a unique way.

My scholarly spiritual expedition included stories that are emotional, powerful, and political at times. Other stories revealed authenticity, cultural influences, and spiritual moments in explanatory texts. Stories were used to convey relationships, customs and traditions, inequities, and messages of change. These stories allowed me to use my voice, my histories to affect change, while illustrating my journey in life.

Memory work is a creative method that is taken from a group to an individual effort. This less conventional approach tries to go from the margins to the centers in a world not easily or simply defined. Stories used in memory work convey value and ways of life, beliefs, and culture in a performative method of discovery for analysis. Memory work as used in this autoethnographic research was liberating, intense, creative, and is ever evolving. Searching for the spirit as the researcher and researched allows moments of emancipation to articulate the freedoms found in the telling of personal stories for the construction of meaning.

Memory work may be used to share traditions and culture of a community or society. Some Indigenous cultures see ceremony in our stories and give gravitas to them. There is a reverence in shared lived experiences that may open ways of healing through relationships. Finding one's identity in stories opens participants to making meaningful connections. These connections to each other, in and of our world, can bring empathy and understanding to our relationships.

My medicine bag carries an autoethnographic tale of Indigeneity and memory to the research table. This is a unique way to transcend the requirements of group settings to memory work to be embraced and engaged by the individual. In cultural spaces, the discoveries of the self can be illustrated in the stories we tell each other, knowing that once the story is told, it is now open for revelation, interpretation, and remembering.

Storytelling and oral histories are traditional ways of knowing for many Native peoples. Research that makes a space for this transcends boundaries and binaries by its interconnectedness and inclusion. Only with my stories can this information been revealed. Through autoethnography and memory work, this type of transformative learning takes place. Unconventional methods yield revelations and meaning that would otherwise have remained in the shadows, unacknowledged, and hidden even from the researcher.

There is uniqueness in writing an autoethnography that comes with its own inherent implications and constraints. Assumptions made in research may be accepted or rejected by a reader. Shifting perspectives throughout the stories may encounter resistance. Constructed meaning may be seen as powerful or coercive. Uneasy encounters with challenges to conventional research may be embraced or met with resistance.

Honoring the world we inhabit leads to changes in our perceptions. Being part of a true global community means using different and new ways to make connections and foster understanding. Research may lead to leaving the comfort of the familiar to open new paths of discovery. Readers of these stories may reflect on their own stories, memories, and discoveries. Without attempting these new paths, learning and transformation may be restrained and limited. A lived method of research tests hegemonic constraints to open complementary passageways to knowledge.

I have used elements of research display employed by Patti Lather and her co-author in their *Troubling the Angels* book (1997). My elements weave autoethnography in narratives and storytelling modeled by Carolyn Ellis to make meaning to lives within a cultural context. Intermixed are small historical notes as a nod to Gloria Ladson-Billings' *Beyond the Big House* (2005) with the use of Native women's stories from history. These showcased in a small manner their perspectives and principles as participants who begin to be educated regarding the culture that surrounded them. Lather's book weaved method, data, and analysis in an interpretative text open to multiple ways of reading and understanding. She employed facts, figures, themes, stories, and the researchers' reflections while writing these difficult narratives. My writing does not attempt to parallel the serious subjects encountered in Lather's book. Instead, I use her model to move outside of comfortable and accessible sense making. This research attempts to construct my medicine bag out of order found within chaos; struggles within roles of participant and observer; and complexities and interdependence within storytelling and memory work.

Just as my medicine bag weaves nine gerund concepts, my writing style incorporated aspects of different researchers' writing techniques. There was reciprocity to my medicine bag concept and these boundary-challenging writing approaches. It would be difficult to employ one without the other. Why use a medicine bag full of woven gerunds within a conventional framework? Why use differing writing styles to showcase standard approaches to research? For my purposes, this was an ideal interconnectedness to display my concepts and my results.

This research embraces an appreciation of methods outside of the conventional. Epistemologies can be valued that reject knowledge as neutral and without bias. It is a critical political act to find worth and value in the stories, memories, and educational experiences of

those living outside the margins. Not comfortably outside, but someone who has lived in the shadows.

Autoethnography allows for the researcher to be the researched; an acceptable place to be the object of study. How does my exploration contribute to this? It carves a path of inclusion to incorporate complementary stances of Indigenous, feminist, and cultural competency. It employs a multiplicity of writing voices with representations from a variety of sources, both outside and within. This unfamiliar, or even uncomfortable, approach is weaved into knowledge discovery and formation.

Displayed within my investigation is memory work used outside of the traditional bounds of feminist memory work. This is not in the purvey of the group, but in a place for the individual voice as subject in autoethnography. Autoethnography is open to the voice of individual experiences now aided with memory work exploration. The voices of participants are counted as data in a traditional study, so now the memory voices of the individual are data within an autoethnographic investigation. These voices are displayed as the scholarly spiritual composition of my medicine bag.

When does someone who has multiple, shifting identities tell their stories? Where are the methods to respect and appreciate a life lived from that person's own perspective? When doing research with others, we struggle to be an objective observer knowing that our very presence changes and challenges the dynamics and the data acquired. How much more so when it is one person's learned experience?

Colleges often promote social justice as integral to their message. Distributing privileges and opportunities begin in uncomfortable spaces. It is a political act to value the input of graduate students when methods of accepted research reside with the privilege and power of

decision makers. This is uncomfortable indeed, and is a constant reminder that inclusion comes from these uneasy spaces.

Participating in a lived method of inquiry is an enriching experience. The past comes into the present to provide meaning, and hopefully, to transform the future. Stories serve as a living example of enduring visions, hopes, and meanings as context for our lives. This type of research is a free expression of dynamic discovery as one's educational life journey unfolds along the way.

Possible Future Research and Practice

Advisors may use this type of autoethnographic memory work to open avenues for research into topics important to them. Where my study used Indigenous, feminist, and cultural competent concepts, other advisors may want to inform their research from concepts appropriate to them. This could open a pathway for additional voices to be valued for investigation.

Transformative study and learning can take place in spaces valued by the individual advisor or student of advising. They may place emphasis on listening to both themselves and their students. Storytelling encouraged by advisors may allow moments for students to carefully share and reflect. Storytelling by advisors may mirror connections that otherwise may have been unexplored. Authentic and informal building of relationships may take place.

There were outliers in the gerunds that did not encompass all three categories for analysis. Some gerunds that repeated may have only been evident in writings placed in the Indigenous grouping, for example. Words like *storytelling*, *navigating*, and *portraying* are some that stood out. Coding with gerunds also led to many words running in common in two components, but not in the third. *Understanding* was common in the Indigenous and the culturally competent groups. *Welcoming* was found in the feminist and Indigenous clusters. As

Charmaz (2014) states, gerunds prompt thinking out of static topics to analyze for actions where connections will remain implicit. These additional gerunds gathered from the data added tensions in the process of selecting which would be used in this research. They thus both enriched and complexified my analysis by forcing me to tease out the meanings in those selected gerunds and in some cases to spill over very slightly into connections that were a part of the outliers when it was not possible to silence them.

Although it generally was not possible to include these outliers here, their use could be expanded in a possible future research article. It would be interesting to explore where these additional gerunds could take my findings. They may provide different directions to explore, ascertain gaps in the data, and provide incentives for comparing data and codes. The possibilities would be led by the gerunds themselves, and might afford extra paths for investigation and writing.

Meaning-making can push against normative and dominant approaches, and move toward what really works. Hegemonic approaches have to be acknowledged for the power and privilege from which they derived. No longer should there be one brief mention of inclusion, but a real embracing of inclusive and alternative ways of knowing. Advisors as individuals can voice their concerns and their accomplishments by developing their own distinctive styles. This allows for approaches to vary per advisor and per student. There can be conformity as well as nontraditional ways integrated into the advising experience.

Researchers and advisors may use this study as a springboard to more richly realized investigations. While I struggled to rein in my thoughts and opinions, others may use this platform to be more frank and fully realized. Where I used constraint in my stories and approaches, others may feel more freedom to explore. Another advisor or researcher may come

from a position where their voice can be expressed in the mode or model representative of their lived experiences.

The future of this type of research into academic advising can be disseminated to a larger audience through university workshops targeting academic advisors and via accepted presentations at academic advising conferences. NACADA has many regional conferences, as well as a national conference stage that may be utilized.

Academic advising is a profession that has been coming into its own within the last 40 years. Papers extolling the positive aspects of this study will be submitted for publication in peer-reviewed journals that serve the field of academic advising. There is also an advising journal by NACADA, an academic advising journal called *The Mentor* at Penn State University, and the *Journal of Academic Advising* at Indiana University, to name a few. One or more of these may be avenues for publication of aspects of my study.

Concluding Remarks

Some things have changed in my advising practices with students as the result of this research. Academic advising goes beyond the three concepts of Indigenous, feminist, and cultural competency. Transformative learning has taken place where this journey has shown me that I have just begun understanding in rudimentary ways the many needs of student when they come into the advising space.

There is freedom, a type of emancipation which has taken place through this process of self-reflection. When a student starts to talk about their recent discovery of Indigenous heritage, for example, I need to provide a quiet place for reflection, free from interjection. As the student is *sharing*, I must not be afraid of the silences for they are the places where *becoming* unfolds into moments of *meaning* and *learning*. When a student feels comfortable enough to relay these

personal moments, it exhibits an instant from their very *being* and brings it into the advising appointment.

My reflexive responses now attempt to include connections with students within our conversations. Time is more thoughtfully spent *working* through our conversations for meaning *making* while continually holding the best interests of the student in regard. As a student stops by a few times a week to my office space to talk about sports during my lunch time and before their class, I am sure to be *including* specific inquiries into the conversation. Perhaps this might not always be effective for every student, but has been successful thus far for one individual. I try to carefully ask about their progress in a class in which they have had past difficulties. Since they are retaking the class to improve their performance, I want to gently find out how they are doing. *Regarding* the progress of the student is important of course. Making a connection where the student is comfortable to communicate and share is paramount.

There has also been growth and maturity during this research process to understand that I may not be able to assist many of the most vulnerable of our students. My spirit is heavy within me to even think of those I could not help. It is difficult to have to call after a student to find out why they aren't making progress or why they aren't coming to class. This is required at time in my position. When I hear from the voice on the other end that this phone number is for a concerned neighbor only, that the student does not have family, it gives me pause. I cannot not share the student's academic issues with them, but only ask that they have the student return my call, if possible. Even in my short time here, I have many in my thoughts that were unable to return to school for a variety of heartbreaking reasons. Part of my advising practices must allow me to accept those things that I cannot not change.

Conducting this research served as a constant reminder to be present with my students, really present despite any distractions. Being in the moment is the best that I can do for them. Giving students the attention they deserve is a direct offshoot of this scholarly exploration: being present and purposeful, to hold them in the esteem with which all students should be regarded.

Meaning construction as researcher and participant involves the body, mind, and spirit to deepen experiences and elevate encounters. This journey is a beginning for adventures still to come. Even at certain points in a life where there may be a preconceived notion of how one should behave, you can transcend expectations of society, and more importantly, the expectations and limitations we put on ourselves.

These unfinished endings are beginnings of another phase of life. It is often stated that each person is a unique individual, but where are the spaces where it is celebrated and valued? We value research into groups where we have little knowledge, or research into participants as part of a lived experience. Research also needs to embrace the individual as worthy of reflection. There is great potential of the individual self that needs to be acknowledged in the pursuit of lifelong learning. Sharing this realization may evolve and blossom into alternative ways of knowing. Social change, justice, and the personal as political are true mechanisms revealed in autoethnography threaded through memory work.

This work may be shared with those friends and colleagues who opened their histories and stories to maintain connections. These decolonizing approaches carry the struggle to remember our traditions and culture through interconnectedness and interactions with others. It took a community to launch and nurture my early interest in elder Indigenous women's engagement in cultural traditions. Collaborative dialogues led to additional branches of interest and inquiry.

Their perspectives and shared ways of knowing gave hope for research engagement with the autoethnographic process. These elder Native women used their journeys to encourage me through their interest and communal shared spaces. I acknowledge as a non-Indigenous person that my own privilege and position required engagement in the process of decolonizing to broaden my understanding.

Indigenous epistemologies expand on a possible vision to imagine transformative research grounded in hope that values the past. These beliefs are open to trusting the past in remembrance of those who came before. Our ancestors provided the influence of tradition and culture for the potential of future promise.

Critical reflection leads to communication as a crucial component for decolonization. Education and academic advising that strives to be reliable should also be relational with our global community and those we met on our scholarly spiritual expeditions. Opportunities to thoughtfully engage with social concepts are revealed through autoethnography, Indigeneity, and memory work.

This scholarly spiritual exhibition will continue to open my passage to *working, meaning, learning, making, regarding, sharing, including, being, and becoming* within academic advising. Indigeneity and memories will continue to inform my medicine bag that I have filled during this personal discovery. I invite all who are interested to begin their own distinctive journeys.

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Appendix A

IRB Response

From: wvukc@mail.wvu.edu <wvukc@mail.wvu.edu>

Sent: Thursday, June 29, 2017 9:56 AM

To: Melissa Sherfinski

Subject: IRB Protocol Notice: Review Not Required for Protocol 1706644873

IRB protocol number: [1706644873](#)

Title: Autoethnography-Using Memory as a Resource for Culturally Sustaining Advising

PI: Melissa Beth Sherfinski

The West Virginia University Institutional Review Board reviewed the above-referenced protocol on 29-Jun-2017 and determined that it does not meet the definition of human subject research. To access this protocol, click on the protocol number link provided. Your correspondence concerning this action can be found in the correspondence section [HERE](#). Any future protocol action requests can be completed through the WVU+kc system.

NEED HELP? The Office of Research Integrity and Compliance is here to assist you from initial submission of a protocol through approval and all subsequent actions. If you have any questions, please contact the Office of Research Integrity and Compliance at [304-293-7073](tel:304-293-7073) or email IRB@mail.wvu.edu. Thank you.

Appendix B: Gerunds

Cultural Competency Gerunds

Taken from 5 stories:

Corn soup/fry bread

Japanese garden

Cross-cultural advising

Orientation

Too poor for superstition

Sitting

Gathering

Beating

Nesting

Stacking

Owning

Findings

Over-riding

Fasting

Fasting

During

Kneading

Understanding

Loving

Looking

Sifting

Seeing

Eating

Raising

Working

Making

Doing

Taking

Making

Asking

Something

Anything

Making

Soaking

Cooking

Including

Illuminating

Suffering

Lacking

Meaning

Making

Researching

Running

Walking

Feeling

Having

Feeling

Writing

Melding

During

Meeting

Something

Following

Sharing

Relying

Sharing

Grounding

Advising

Encouraging

Planting

Brings

Working

Becoming

Regarding

Nothing

Conducting

Counting

Engineering

Juggling

Encouraging

Accepting

Something

During	Regarding	Everything
Advising	Serving	Dealing
Referring	Happening	Meeting
Training	Heart-wrenching	Preparing
Advising	Listening	Advising
Advising	Reacting	Dealing
Accepting	Reading	Moving
Advising	Sharing	Reassuring
Advising	Meeting	Prodding
Including	Meeting	Including
Advising	Disbelieving	Registering
Advising	Demeaning	Overeating
Being	Disparaging	Falling
Advising	Visiting	Readings
Working	Including	Writing
Bring	Attending	Incoming
Training	Meeting	Assisting
Illuminating	Meeting	Understanding
Being	Weighing	Scheduling
Accompanying	Meeting	Learning
Training	Understanding	Challenging
Listening	Understanding	Hoping
Listening	Understanding	Learning
Retaining	Arriving	

Feminist Gerunds

Taken from 5 stories:

Mom's turn to learn

*Aging & Elder Indig.
women*

Spirit/energy quilt

*Advisor
educator/interceder*

MBA story

Regarding

Inquiring

Encouraging

Welcoming

Encouraging

Welcoming

Walking

Growing

Coming

Encouraging

Cooking

Cleaning

Thinking

Teaching

Blessing

Following

Volunteering

Knowing

Unfolding

Working

Learning

Being

Learning

Becoming

Having

Living

Learning

Regarding

Raising

Boarding

Going

Fulfilling

Knowing

Regarding

Doing

Ageing

Becoming

Regarding

Aging

Educating

Aging

Aging

Aging

During

Aging

Addressing

Considering

Addressing

Aging

Possessing

Being

Resulting

Developing

Regarding

Conducting

Talking

Positioning

Demonstrating

Positioning

Grouping

Behaving

Identifying

Neglecting

Ever-growing

Wanting

Nothing

Regarding

Learning

Invading	Regarding	Invading
Continuing	Keeping	Continuing
Healing	Teaching	Healing
Thinking	Regarding	Thinking
Regarding	Learning	Regarding
Saying	Engineering	Saying
Watching	Meeting	Watching
Something	Receiving	Something
Giving	Reassuring	Giving
Landing	Regarding	Landing
Astonishing	Knowing	Astonishing
Exploring	Getting	Exploring
Living	Telling	Living
Smiling	Trying	Smiling
Having	Regarding	Having
Building	During	Building
Building	Degree-seeking	Building
Relaxing	Farming	Relaxing
Welcoming	Following	Welcoming
Relaxing	Enjoying	Relaxing
Making	Advising	Making
Viewing	Bring	Viewing
Touching	Everything	Touching
Regarding	Researching	During
Incoming	Lacking	Considering
Planning	Using	Engineering

Pursuing

Fascinating

Interesting

Working

Struggling

Adjusting

Taking

Juggling

Finding

Studying

Working

Trying

Talking

Achieving

Nothing

Marketing

Writing

Failing

Letting

Disintegrating

Engineering

Pursuing

Going

Indigenous Gerunds

Taken from 5 stories:

Quilts/broken promises

Pony Beads

Alaskan Native, etc.

Dance Fans/Finger Masks

Master's Degree

Engaging

Being

Defining

Grouping

Quilting

Making

Making

Working

Exacting

Requiring

Cutting

Measuring

Placing

using

challenging

something

learning

looking

building

washing

washing

being

unfolding

understanding

meaning

storytelling

meaning

meaning

stating

learning

something

varying

passing

sewing

cooking

serving

discussing

entering

quilting

owning

telling

coping

fumbling

meeting

working

working

beading

hangings

beading

hangings

accommodating

working

beading

morning

knowing

regarding

during

saying

bring

making

hoping

passing

during

pursuing

sewing

knitting

crocheting

learning

nothing

during

bring

thinking	opening	living
watching	waiting	buying
wanting	during	withholding
beading	during	submitting
upbringing	reciting	submitting
finishing	according	being
working	helping	following
cleaning	illuminating	smiling
paying	including	frowning
visiting	sharing	intriguing
hearing	living	portraying
talking	herding	stating
keeping	originating	nothing
understanding	coming	dancing
helping	boarding	attempting
teaching	healing	starving
supporting	enduring	setting
coming	boarding	entering
storytelling	being	making
understanding	sharing	learning
desiring	boarding	becoming
decolonizing	boarding	pursuing
positioning	going	regarding
navigating	asking	wellbeing
traversing	trying	working
welcoming	regarding	crafting

regarding	working	testing
knowing	doing	learning
relating	exciting	during
living	willing	testing
realizing	morning	learning
shifting	driving	applying
sharing	evening	learning
providing	driving	continuing
making	spring	working
boarding	enduring	teaching
interesting	seeing	challenging
deeming	blessing	doing
regulating	pursuing	something
sharing	teaching	
thing	during	
engaging	working	
diverging	amusing	
doing	learning	
sewing	thinking	

Appendix C – My Stories

Being Slavic

One of my first educational memories was my mother teaching my brother and me on a blackboard. This was a major purchase for my parents. I loved the times she took to give us lessons during the day before we started kindergarten. It instilled in me a longing to learn that is with me today. One interesting note is that these times had the opposite effect on my younger sibling who hated going to school, and appeared to take after other members of our extended family by having this negative stance toward education.

I could go now into the emotional, physical, and sexual abuse that I suffered as I grew up, but I choose to leave those burdens by the side of the road. I choose to say now that I have dealt with them as best I could at the time, and though they influenced who I am, they will *never* define me. To do otherwise would still give those moments power over me; I choose to take back my power.

It was an interesting journey reading Anzaldua's *Borderlands* as I prepared this story. She deals with embracing the margins and borders. My parents would most probably inhabit similar spaces due to language and culture. I thought of them and my older relatives as I read her book. In the Introduction to the Fourth Edition (p.10), they addressed the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia and the building of borders as well as their demolition and continual redrawing.

My parents grew up in families with little regard for formal education, and had experiences with types of indentured servitude. When my maternal grandmother couldn't pay her bill at the local market (due, in part, to the death of her husband), my grandmother told them that my mother would leave school and work for them until the bill was settled. My mother refused, and continued with school. She told me that one of her most proud personal moments was graduating from high school.

My father accepted his indentured servitude with great resignation. My grandparents were not able to move to another town that had more employment prospects since they were still paying hospital bills from when the firstborn son died at 17. They pulled my father out of high school to live in the hospital administrator's barn to work off their bill. He later got his GED, but I always wondered how it must have hurt a bit when my mom went to her high school reunions. No reunions for dropouts.

My father talked to me about the difficulties him and his older brother (the one who passed away) endured as non-English speakers in elementary school. He said he had to come home and tell his parents that they must speak English, or they would be thrown out of school. His mother spoke English proudly without an accent, but had acquiesced to her husband by only speaking Serbo-Russian at home.

It was my father who often educated me as best he could on the recent history of our relatives and our families. Further into *Borderlands*, I came across her *Cervicide* essay (p. 126), and it caused me grievous despair. I was right back as a child hearing the stories of the *Srbosjek*, literally Serb-cutter in the Croatian language, used by the Ustase (Croatian Revolutionary Organization) to slaughter captives of their Jasenovac concentration camp during the Second World War. The *Srbosjek* made it easier to slit throats with such efficiency that there is documentation of competitions to see who might kill the most during a set period of time. The Ustase came into power in part due to Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. My father said that the Croatians considered themselves to have Nordic and Mediterranean ancestry, and thus superior to Serbians.

There is great controversy over exactly how many died in this Jasenovac concentration camp. Estimates are as high as 1.4 million, while a Croatian academic claims, through

meticulous research, that only 83,000 died. These figures are in dispute, and the smaller figure is often cited since written records cannot be found. This Serbian genocide never appeared in any of my history books when I was growing up. This lack of inclusion was an excellent foundation for other books I became familiar with when I returned to college later in life. In the past so many had their stories in the margins where they were not valued.

I grew up learning that being Serbo-Russian, German, Indigenous Saami, and Canadian First Nations put me in the category of *other*. I learned in school that someone like me should *not* be intelligent. My first grade teacher told my mother it was a shame that my intelligence was gifted to me. Despite her looking down at me, she *had to* select me because of my test scores for a town honor. My school district, because of a town centennial celebration, had decided to honor one senior high schooler and one first grader (me) who scored the highest on the intelligence tests that year. A full-page picture of us appeared in our local newspaper. My uncle, who was a policeman, showed the newspaper picture to the mayor, and said I was his niece. He didn't believe him. My uncle winked when he told me that the mayor said people like us aren't capable of accomplishing much.

Our next door neighbor at that time was our school counselor. He called me into his office afterward to say that they were downgrading my score since no one like me should have done that well. I never forgot how his breath smelled and how he leaned over me. Pretty intimidating stuff. My mother said she never forgot how I was viewed by those in power, or what had been said to her regarding me. Additionally I never forgot that those in power can, at times, do whatever they wish if they don't agree with the facts presented.

It is interesting also to think about my educational journey in view of the amount of melanin in one's skin, and the whole social construct of race. From those similar to me, I learned

that I couldn't quite be a Slav, since I was, in their estimation, too dark. Even in the margins, we are "othered". Thanks to a scholarship, student loans, and working part-time during school and full-time in the summers, I went to college. I can reflect back and realize that I was seen as an *other*. From today's perspective, one might say I was exoticised, seen as an interesting other and questioned for my intellect. It is interesting to look back and try to decide how much of my educational journey to reveal.



Me: elementary school

Too poor for superstition

I am finally sitting down; gathering my thoughts. Successfully beating the ice storm, only for it to close the university and delay getting my housing, etc. But at last I am here. Just in these few days of work I am constantly amazed at all of the stories that make up our human condition, our human connection. On to a phrase of my mom's...

My sister-in-law asked, upon the birth of their first grandchild, if most Slavic people believe that you don't take a baby's picture during the first forty days of its birth. Their grandchild has Slavic heritage, and they had been told that. I repeated my mother's words; no such belief passed on in our family.

Many so-called traditions, cultural concepts, etc. related to Slavic peoples are certainly not universal. I meant to mention the nesting, stacking, matryoshka doll that I saw in your dining room. I never had one of those until my son went, in high school, to Russia and Siberia, thanks to a newspaper's town exchange program. He brought some back from Russia where they carve them especially to sell to tourists.

When I grew up many Slavic people in my church were into being tamburitzans where they showcased ethnic costumes or dance or music. I wanted to learn to play tambura, an indigenous instrument, called the Brac (pronounced braatch). These are the times that you learn that not everything is meant for you. You learn that traditions associated with part of your so-called culture are really just for those in the position to engage in these customs. For many of us *the culture* is out of reach.

Some of the elder Indigenous women that I have formed friendships with over these past years have told me of similar experiences. Though American Indian culture in the United States may be associated with pow wows (a type of pan-Indian event), not everyone is in the position to participate. The costumes are detailed, hand-sewn, and quite elaborate. Unless you have the

financial where withal or a relative interested in making regalia for you, many are not able to participate.

Pow wow regalia often include eagle feathers in the headdress. A non-native is prohibited in our country from owning an eagle feather. The national park service keeps any dead eagles they find (or eagle feathers) to distribute to federally recognized tribal nations. This is not as simple as it sounds. The attainment of eagle feathers for Indigenous Americans is often politicized. You have to be a member of a *federally* recognized tribe. You have to have favor in the tribal community to be considered for such an acquisition. Then finally a tribal member must be able to afford to purchase the eagle or eagle feathers. Being economically disadvantaged plays a major role in participation in traditional cultural events.

I loved how the issue of class was place in the neat category of socio-economic status verbiage when I came back to school to finish my graduate education. Please note my sarcasm. In the first Curriculum and Instruction class I took with Dr. Pat Obenauf, we were able to select a book from a stack she brought to class to read and report on. I pick one that discussed case studies of people that did well in higher education only to be drawn back into a life of economic despair. In one of Dr. David Callejo Perez's classes (when he was here at WVU), I learned of research that addressed the findings that economic hardship was a great equalized among ethnic groups. The poorer you were, the less likely you were to place emphasis on stereotypically ethnic differences.

This lack of an over-riding emphasis on ethnic differences was modeled during my impoverished childhood, though there were times then that these differences seemed to be played against each other, as a way to place blame anywhere but on the true sources of our misery. Sad to see some of this still being apparent in our country today.

I know that in my childhood the books of Charles Dickens especially resonated with me. Nowhere else did I see economic hardships, child labor, and the cruel results of debt on display. As a precocious child I had my mother borrow these from our library (they were for adults only.) In my youth we had library cards, and strict librarians, that only let the young borrow from a certain section of our town library. In fact it was only due to my precociousness that my mom got that first library card. These books were never assigned in any class that I took throughout my K-12 education.



George & Helen, my parents, at age 52

Corn soup story

My paternal grandfather was a baker by trade. He was from a Slavic/Balkan and Saami (Indigenous herding people) background. One thing he always thought that I made better than him was pogacha bread, which could be made with or without (fasting version) eggs, milk or butter. The fasting version of pogacha was made by Coptic Christian and Eastern Orthodox peoples during the period before Christmas (Advent) and Easter (Lent). One day I told him my secret—I channel all of my frustrations into the bread while kneading. He simply smiled and nodded in understanding.

I was intrigued when a woman of Indigenous heritage, invited me to join her at her home as she made Indian fry bread and corn soup. We left my little car at her home and drove around in her much larger vehicle. When I complimented her car and her license plate with her name on it, she said both were gifts from her husband who had passed away. She shared that she was fortunate to have had a loving second marriage, though her ex remained as a shadow in her life. She and I had these experiences in common.

We drove around looking specifically for unsifted flour and salt pork. Unsifted flour is basically all-purpose flour that has not gone through a sifting process that eliminates lumps and adds air. When I was younger, we often used a sifter at home to make our own sifted flour, if required by a recipe. I was curious about the salt pork. It looks like an uncut slab of bacon, but is saltier and not cured or smoked. She had already obtained the corn for use in the soup. This field corn or maize goes through a treatment process to become hominy. The field corn has much larger kernels than the sweet corn I was used to seeing and eating. I marveled at the size and heft of the corn. She was surprised I had never seen it before and said certain people in her area are known for raising this type of corn.

She started the soup in these giant vats with the hominy and water. Hours later she would drain the pots, rinse the hominy, and start again. My novice status relegated me to pot washer, and it reminded me of working with another close friend for a yearly Indigenous event with her sister. There too my relative lack of expertise led me to the pots and pans.

While the soup simmered, she began making the fry bread. She got a large bowl and began to add flour, water, and so on. While she was doing that she asked me add oil to a skillet on her kitchen counter, and to turn on the heat to a specific temperature. As the mixture was dolloped into the oil, I was responsible for taking each individual biscuit out to drain on paper towels. After they cooled a bit, we placed the individual fry breads into their own wax paper bag. She said that maybe the next time she'd let me try my hand at making the bread.

When we were done with the fry bread, and as the corn soup simmered on her stove, she began asking if I had my own computer since I was in school. As an aside, many of the elder women that I have met during my research do not have a computer or access to one. Many do not have cell phones either, and rely on their landline phones at home. She wanted to ask me for a favor. Someone told her there was a way to use the internet to look up general topics, without an encyclopedia, and that people often contribute to the body of knowledge using something that sounds like "encyclopedia", but begins with a "w". Yes, Wikipedia; what did she want me to check?

She wanted to know if they talk about the process to turn the field corn into hominy with lime (mineral) or lye (hardwood ashes.) When she was very young she was taught the lying process, and she used the ashes. She asked if I found anything, would I mind making a copy of it and send it to her, since she'd like to read what is being said about it. Little did I know what a wealth of knowledge would unfold for me?

As I searched about the process of making hominy, I found that the method is called nixtamalization, and has Mesoamerican roots. Soaking and cooking the corn in an alkaline process (limewater) or through an alkali process (lye ashes) releases the benefit of nixtamalization. (Pappa Affiliation, 2010, p. 130) It is through this process the niacin (vitamin B3) is freed in the corn and allows it to be absorbed by humans. (Mendez-Montevalvo, et al., 2007, p.420) Nixtamalization unlocked a source of essential nutrients which permitted early Indigenous civilizations to thrive on Turtle Island (North America.) European colonists took the plant and used it throughout the world without the transformation procedure. This led to malnutrition and pellagra (a vitamin deficiency disease caused by the lack of niacin) that spread throughout the poor in many colonized countries during this time, including those in the United States south. Sadly pellagra remains an issue today in certain parts of the world.

I sent this information to my friend along with a note regarding how illuminating this search for her had been for me. The very next time I was asked to make a presentation on culturally competency, I specifically included this information. Unfortunately, the information did not appear to have an impact on my audience anywhere near what it had on me. As someone with a Bachelor of Science degree in biology, I was fascinated that, due in part to a lack of respect and adherence to the traditions of Native cultures, much suffering was visited on people. Without this knowledge, disenfranchised populations were subjected to a dominant culture that thrust upon them a crop with which they were lacking important knowledge to assist in the proper and healthy consumption of this dietary staple. *Meaning making* from a story told to me by a Native elder modeled the respect that should be made for Indigenous expertise. (Xiim, 2008, p.44) The impact of researching this topic brought home cultural competency, and all that it entails, in a powerful way.



K & C

Nose

I had a ripped picture of my profile from a previous life that I just could not bring myself to send to you—since you asked for photos. Ugh, it really is a part of me that I would rather forget, but this autoethnographic journey has caused me to examine some of the parallels in my own life with the elder Native women that I have come to know.

Who get to decide what a member of an ethnic group looks like? Where do these stereotypes come from, and why do they persist? You mentioned that I should re-read the master's thesis again, which I did peruse this evening. Frankly I wish I could hide behind poetry. I wish for the gift that both my mother and my son received—but only in terms of writing this paper.

Relying on my reflections, my narrative is a vulnerable place to be. I despise thinking about all of the comments I received related to my appearance during my life. It is odd to have experienced life as an anorexic with a prominent nose to now the end days of a life as an obese older woman. Our society has devolved into a place where my lack of eating would be held in high esteem. Unfortunately both the former and current *me* model a person with a myriad of issues, not the least being my relationship with food, as well as my true desire to complete my education.

It's funny despite my whole bizarre journey in life, the one constant was this wee small voice that still grasped the dream to complete my education. I have allowed others' comments, others' perceptions of me to hold me back until I really have no time to make excuses anymore.

One of my elder friends of Iroquoian heritage talked to me about how she almost allowed her lifetime to pass without taking control of her body and her life. She said how she allowed each disparaging remark about her name (which she used to despise), about her facial features,

about her skin color, and about her weight to cut her deeply. She used to joke when she'd see someone from her community that had been working outside during the summer, that their tanned skin made them look like a *real* Indian. And there *she* was, as real as could be, but without a stereotypical appearance. This powerful, strong, brilliant, wise, funny woman had faced so much and persevered.

So I look back as someone now who is in the new role as a fulltime advisor—looking at education from another perspective. I am a non-Indigenous educator and advisor who hopes to rise to being a scholar, at least in regard to finishing my degree. How do I look at pedagogy engagement and my higher ed journey through these various lens?



Me: 1994

Mom's turn to learn

A few years back the local paper that comes in the mail on Saturdays had an ad from our university regarding *Mom's Turn to Learn*. It was an outreach program for non-traditional students with a liberal arts background that might want to return to college to complete an education. After much encouragement from partner and from progeny I applied with the hope to complete a master's degree. The possible desire to continue to a doctorate degree was a faint ember stoked during my graduate journey.

In the pursuit of my master's came the opportunity for research. I seized this as my chance to engage with women of Indigenous heritage, and was fortunate to contact someone interested in giving me a chance. I had left a message with my now close friend, inquiring as to a possible visit. When she returned my phone call that Monday morning at 7:50am I was astonished. It was an instant that forever changed my life. Me, I was going to get a chance to do research with elder Indigenous women that had never met me before. I honestly could not believe my good fortune.

I reflect on that moment as I have completed one week of work in Washington State, thousands of miles away from loved ones. In a phone call to my son I expressed how everyone I have encountered thus far has been warm, encouraging, and welcoming. He said it sounds like you're in a reverse Twilight Zone—funny but I knew exactly what he meant. That first time I met my Iroquoian friends, they too were warm, encouraging, and welcoming. I was humbled to be in their presence. It was like walking into a room full of friends you had yet to encounter; friends you didn't know you had; friends that would truly be cared for by me, and that would be there for me also in my time of need. Friends unaware.

One thing I learned growing up was *women's* work. I'm not afraid to clean a floor, wash a dish, etc. When I would visit the elder women, they would encourage me to stay, if possible, longer and longer. They would tell me of activities coming up and encouraging me to attend. The second event I attended, my dear friend that returned my call was the main person doing the cooking and cleaning. Without even thinking about it, I pitched in to assist. She would shout order to me and the rest of her helpers with aplomb. The first time I said 'ok, boss' to her, she smiled and said now you belong—that's what everyone else calls me. Here I want to insert 'lol'.

In later years she and her sister had an opportunity to help with an Indigenous event over a two-week period. I mentioned that I could ask my professor if I could take one day of teaching off to join them. I taught Tuesdays and Thursdays, so I was able to leave after my Tuesday class and return with my spouse's blessing the following Monday. My friend was happily surprised at my volunteering, and it was probably one of the best decisions in regard to my relationship with her. My professor allowed me to teach online for the one Thursday class each of three fall semesters. My friend and her sister only worked for the event for those three years, but, oh the bond that was being formed, the intimacy of *knowing as we are known*.

The first year my friend had to drive from the facility to gather supplies and told me to ride along. These drives were sessions of unfolding. My friend began by telling me, as she drove, about her life with all of its complexities. When she gave me a moment to share, I knew that this was a time to either share honestly or to hold back. I could not do less in the face of her bravery than to be less than open also. This is reflected in my autoethnographic research mission—give this opportunity I must grasp it for it is my last chance.

My friend shared that she could understand going back to school later in life. She too had made that decision a few years back. At that time she was divorced and a parent to many

dependents. She decided to go to a community college to pursue an associate's degree while working away from her Indigenous home. She shared her love of the learning experience, the comradery of being in the presence of her fellow students. She said that she knew that online learning in higher education was becoming more popular, but she could not imagine not having the opportunity to be in the presence of her fellow students as they made their way through a class. She treasured each experience there.

Her children were now also exposed to a world away from the protections of an engaged community of shared heritage. She shared that one of her children, due to their very negative experiences with outsiders, carried great bias toward non-natives. When they began living in a heterogeneous neighborhood, her child did not care for the throw-away comments of some regarding their apparent Native background. She said that this was a good learning experience that it is better to get to know individuals than to rely on preconceived notions. She said this was a lesson she would hope would encourage her child to treat people as unique individuals, just as they wished to be treated. It was during this time that she would meet her future second husband who assisted her with raising her children.

My other close friend who was forced into an Indian boarding school told me at a later time of her experience of going to college in the Midwest to work on an Associate's degree also. She said she had hoped this would lead to a path of independence from her circumstances. It was there she met someone from the same Native background as herself. She said the pull to come back along with the fantasy of a fulfilling marriage caused her to abandon her initial dream. She said that she could now reflect back that, although her marriage was not a happy one, she loved her children. And like my first friend, and me, from the ashes of that failed first relationship rose a second happier one. She said that she could have never imagined knowing marital happiness in

her fifties till she met her second husband. He sheltered and cared for her until he passed away. She now lives in their home, full of reminders of their shared love and shared heritage.



Clan quilt by C

Wellbriety: a journey of forgiveness

Like many living a marginalized, disenfranchised life in our country, some Native peoples have struggled with addiction. A healing approach using the wisdom of past generations' is used by an organization called White Bison. The white bison is often seen as a symbol of hope, a symbol of better things to come for some Native Americans. Because of the insidious history of boarding school education being forced on Indigenous peoples, the White Bison organization decided to travel through the United States and visit each place where Natives were forcibly placed.

The Wellbriety Journey for Forgiveness was a national campaign that supported a collective healing of Native American peoples from the curses of historical trauma and unresolved grief believed to have their deepest roots in what Native people experienced at these schools. Historical or intergenerational trauma has been described as a type of post-traumatic stress disorder that has been passed down through generations. The Wellbriety Journey for Forgiveness was about going back to these schools and taking back what was lost there.

The Wellbriety Movement's Sacred Hoop of 100 Eagle Feathers and eagle staff were transported in a 6,800 mile cross-country trek during the 40-day Journey which began on May 16, 2009, at the oldest continuously operated Indian boarding school, Chemawa, in Salem, Ore. The route ended during the week of June 21 at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. The route included a stop at the site of the first boarding school, Carlisle Indian Industrial School, opened in Carlisle, PA, in 1879. That school was the model school for educating Native American children for more than 60 years. The Journey included stops at 23 present and former school sites where educational activities facilitated talking circles, and

traditional Indian ceremonies were held to promote awareness and support healing from the intergenerational trauma originating from the boarding school experience.

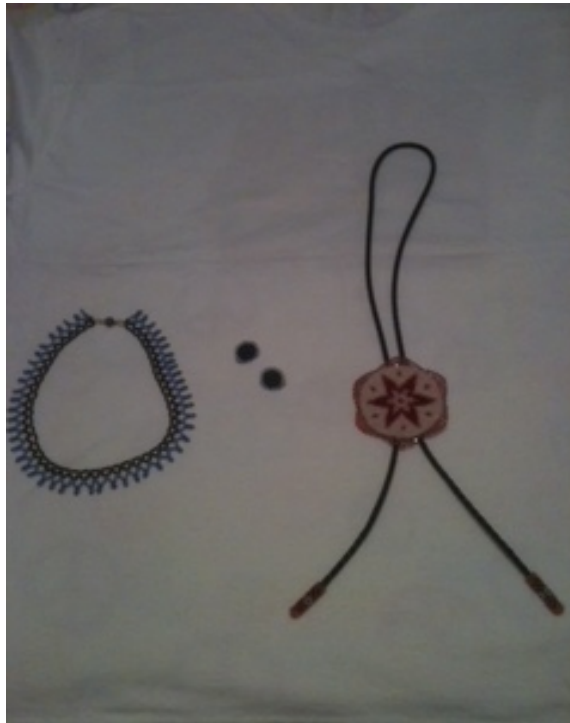
During my graduate work, I have met many Native survivors of boarding school. Some were brought to the continental United States from their homes in Alaska. All were stark, painful stories to hear. What resounded with me at first was the fact that I represented, in a way, a new other—the dominant other. What an uncomfortable space to find myself in. As I got to know some of the people for a longer period of time, they would share even more details of their experiences. Some told me that although it was a struggle to persevere through, they wanted to talk to me about it since I was interested in their educational journey.

I was fortunate in a way, to be visiting an area during one of the Wellbriety stops. I made sure to stay a few extra days in order to be there for their visit. Some of my Native acquaintances attended, some did not. Many that I had met before fought their fears and told their stories to this large gathering. It is difficult to hear such painful occurrences and know that your reaction must be measured. These are not my stories, this is not my pain. I felt it was my duty to sit in solidarity with them. To be sure to listen; to gather my strength.

Some of the participants went into further detail than I had ever heard. Some chose that moment to say how they and theirs had been treated when tribal nations came into their own in recent years. Some had lost their identity, lost their right to belong to a tribal nation of their youth, due to being removed by our nation and forced to go to these boarding schools. There were participants that talked about how hard it was to forgive their parents for letting them go. Only in their own aging passage did they realize how little power their parents had; how fearful their parents must have been. One speaker thanked the Wellbriety Journey for Forgiveness for giving her the platform to say that she has finally forgiven her mother. And with that she also

forgave those that punished and harmed her during this forced schooling experience. She was finally able to say that she was letting go, though it was hard fought to reach that point.

I remember that I was wearing a beaded medicine bag that I had bought from a Native artisan. Someone stopped me and said I must be a medicine bag woman since I am concerned with origins, education, and the healing that can result. As I look back, it was such a kind comment to share with me. I really wish that I had the medicine within me to assist those wounded by their educational experiences.



Beadwork by K

Quilts/broken promises

I was quite fortunate to meet a group of elder women of Indigenous heritage as they were engaging in culturally significant craftwork. As they explored beading, basketry, sewing moccasins, etc., I was permitted to join and share space with them. The privilege of being in their presence has been profoundly defining in both my educational pursuits and in my private life. I am honored to have spent this precious time in their presence.

Many of these Indigenous women come from people who are gathered in groups called clans. This kinship system is similar to family groupings found in Scottish culture also known as clans. Clans provide a sense of shared identity to members, and in Indigenous matrilineal societies, each is linked by a common female ancestor with women possessing a leadership role within the clan. A few women in this senior group mentioned that their heritage did not include a clan system. One elder specifically made clan quilts for members of her ancestry.

When they began to concentrate on quilting, they started by making various lap quilts. A lap quilt appears to be one that can lie comfortably to cover your upper legs as you sit. One project in particular concentrated on making lap quilts for veterans. These had specific dimensions to accommodate wheelchairs and were made from fabrics with a patriotic motif. Native Americans, as an ethnic group in the United States, have the largest percentage of their population engaged in military service, both previously and currently.

As time passed the elders began working on larger quilts of the size and type that might cover a bed. The work was intricate, exacting, and requiring a great amount of time to successfully complete. They worked from a large table cutting, measuring, and placing the fabric pieces. I noted that they were using intricate geometric shapes to execute many of the more challenging patterns. I pointed this out to them since they often would denigrate their beautiful work and say it was just something for older women to do to pass time. They were socially

engaged, actively learning, and always looking for the next challenge---hardly the work of those passing time.

One day, an elder who taught and lead the group invited me to visit her son's new house. They had just completed building it and she wanted to show me around. We took a tour of their place and finally ended up in basement laundry area. She placed what looked like dingy sheets in the washer, then added detergent and bleach. We sat on a couch in a nearby area, and she reached over to say that I didn't know what she was washing, and smiled. I said that no, not specifically, why? She said she was washing muslin that was given to people of her nation by the United States government, and that it was called *treaty cloth*. She said everyone received a small portion, and many of the people brought their portion to these elder women to incorporate into their quilts. Each of these quilts, that I saw being constructed had a secret inside---treaty cloth!

These are the unknown things you learn as you get to know someone or a group of people. Only through a gentle unfolding and the development of trust can revelations come about. This type of "information helps the cultural 'outsider' gain some contextual background to understanding the meanings in the Elders' orality." (Xiiem, 2008, p.31) To actively engage with the story, and be a participant in the day to day activities, might lead to such a revelation that I experienced. A crucial component to storywork is the "interrelationship between the story, storytelling, and listener." (Ibid, p.32)

The unbleached muslin (treaty or annuity cloth) has great meaning to Iroquoian society. The Iroquois, or Haudenosaunee, are Native peoples of eastern woodland Indigenous ancestry. (Birch, 2015, p.263) Their ancestors lived in what now includes part of the U.S. northeast and Canada. To the current descendants of these people, the cloth signifies a confirmation of an 18th

century peace treaty. (Economist, 1994, p.35) I could see on my friend's face that this still held deep meaning to her, and it was a symbol of a treaty that *her* nation never broke.

The Haudenosaunee entered into the Treaty of Canandaigua and Pickering in 1794 with George Washington and the United States government to guarantee their land rights and to serve as protection from further encroachment of their ancestral lands by European colonists. (Mann, 2000, p.54) Along with stating that this treaty would last *as long as the grass shall grow*, an annual allotment of calico cloth would be sent to the Haudenosaunee Confederacy as a reminder of this sacred promise. As the years passed, the promise was broken by our government, and the textile in the yearly allotment has changed from calico to now unbleached muslin. The quantity sent to them has never changed, though the promises from this treaty were never kept.

I didn't ask why they would incorporate this cloth into their quilts. I think I was intimidated by learning something so integral to their peoples' history. Perhaps it is the remembrance that they were as good as their word, though our government was not. These are the times that the weight of the non-native world felt placed on my shoulders. Yes, this is the hurt of my so-called world on their peoples. This is a broken trust, broken promise that they have never forgotten. Yet in their grace, they let me into their lives, into their families, and, in this small way, into their secret places.

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Lap quilt given to me by C

Pony Beads

I am no longer a caretaker to elder relatives and loved ones, but am now one who must again make a way to care for myself. I have cared to varying degrees for grandparents, a former in-law, in-laws, an aunt, and parents. Now with my mother's passing I searched to do research that would engage me, which would be part of who I am.

My mother, to borrow another's words, was "the first great artist I ever met because it's not what you do, it's the passion you approach it with". (LeBlanc, 2012) This was my mother. She put love, care, and her talents into all she did. Whether as my first teacher before I entered elementary school to her sewing, cooking, serving in the church or clerking at a drug store, she modeled enthusiasm in it all.

I decided to seek out older women engaged in craftwork, and the benefits they perceive they receive from such connections, while discussing their educational journey. "Women's art has often been labeled 'crafts' rather than art. This is because women, who were often barred from entering the artistic establishment, have tended to create works of art that were useful and were excluded from the category of 'art'." (Shaw and Lee, 2007, p. 514-515) First I tenuously contacted a nearby quilting guild to ask if I could visit. It was fraught with peril since I found out during that first meeting that owning one's age, even though we were all over 50, was a powerfully negative dynamic. This would not be a good avenue for my research. I remembered a former coworker telling me that one of my issues at work was due to being brought up to respect my elders. My former boss took full advantage of this dynamic. Perhaps there were still some people that valued respect for elders, which would permit me to visit?

I then decided that I wanted to examine the ways that self-identified historical trauma had affected the education of elder Native American women, and how traditional cultural practices may have assisted in coping with historical trauma. After some consideration, I decided to contact a senior group of women of Indigenous heritage who were engaged in craftwork. The day I received the call back to come for a visit was quite a memorable one; a moment that I almost couldn't believe. "Yes, yes, come visit us, we'll be happy to see you." What a joyful moment in my life!

The reality was I was ill prepared to meet and greet these elder women who were so generous to invite me to meet their group. I was fumbling around with my words, quite embarrassed to bother them with meeting me. The leader of the group, Qwin, gave me a welcome hug, took me by the hand to meet the rest of the group. The women there ranged in age from their 70s to their 90s. Qwin said to make myself at home and join in any table that was working on crafts. I was especially interested in the twosome at a table by themselves working on some kind of beading.

"Pony beads" they told me. These were pony bead hangings that they were making for family or for their group to sell to by more crafts. *Pony beads?* Who knew there were different types of beads?

As I learned later, pony and glass seed beads were articles of trade used by early explorers to Turtle Island (the Indigenous name for North America). (Penney, 2004, p.13) They were easy to convey and use, and were popular for their many decorative uses. The fine seed glass beads are most often used in Native regalia today. Tribal nations have different patterns, color usage, and materials integrated into their craftwork. Sometimes bead work or color

patterns synonymous with one nation may have elements incorporated by another. Native Americans originally used beads and crafting materials made from natural substances of parts of animals, shells, porcupine quills, coral, beeswax, turquoise, metals and other stones. (Ibid, p.58) There are as many diverse Native American beading customs, designs, stitches and styles as there are tribal nations. Scaphopods (tusk shells) from shelled marine mollusks were used by some west coast Indigenous peoples for their beadwork. Northeastern tribes often used beads carved from the North Atlantic channeled whelk shell and the quahog, a Western North Atlantic hard-shelled clam to make wampum. Native beadwork can incorporate leather and different strands into their work. Even the strands themselves may be made from thread, wire, or sinew.

These pony bead hangings that they were working on had premade patterns with color changes included per their requirements. Pony beads are larger than glass seed beads, so they were a bit more accommodating for manual dexterity. They told me that Qwin would modify the patterns that they needed, and would set aside for them just the pony bead colors they would need for their projects. Most seniors who were working on beading had to search and select their own beads from bins separated by color.

The two seniors that I joined worked at the same station every time they came, so the materials were left out for them. Deference was shown to them since they were the most senior members of the group. Qwin said they did not always come, and when they did, only stayed from morning to lunchtime. Peggy was 90 and Zelda was 89. I asked if they would mind if I talked to them while they worked. They both agreed, and the elder of the two, Peggy, asked why I was there. I explained that I had gone back to college later in life to complete my education. I said that in graduate school they often required research projects, so I wanted to study the process by which elder women engage or re-engage in handiwork, while I inquired about their

personal educational experiences. When asking for participation from older Native women engaged in traditional ways of knowing, inquiry regarding their background was made during this process.

Peggy talked quite softly, and I had to listen carefully to what she was saying. Both the television and radio competed with the voices of the seniors. I will say that when Peggy talked, the rest of the seniors got very quiet. Qwin later would tell me that Peggy seldom talked, so everyone was interested in what she had to say, and that most were quite astonished that they both had agreed to talk to me.

As they weaved through their patterns carefully, bead by bead, they began to talk. I had brought pastries for the seniors, and I asked if they wanted anything to drink with their treats. Both Peggy and Zelda said that they would have black coffee since they were out of tea. I asked what types of teas they liked, so I could be sure to bring some on my next visit. (Because, believe me, I was overjoyed to be there, and so wanted to come back.)

Peggy said that she was making her beadwork for a granddaughter that had two cats, so she asked Qwin to modify her two-cat pony bead pattern to reflect the colors of her cats. She was hoping the little girl would be happily surprised for Christmas. She said that she had been married, but now lived at a senior center since her husband's passing. Her daughter visited on occasion, but, per her words, was too preoccupied with her career to come too often. It was a refrain I would hear often during my initial visits—that their children were workaholics who were pursuing the so-called American dream. Though many had been raised with reverence for elders, it appeared to be less important to the next generation.

Again, in her unbelievably hushed tones, Peggy told me that her tribal heritage was different than most in the group and she was fortunate to have been raised by *both of her parents*. I would not understand the full power of that statement 'till subsequent visits. Her mother had taught her sewing, but she never learned any other handiwork other than knitting or crocheting. She laughed and said that she was only learning now the things that are often identified as Native craftwork. Slowly as she placed one bead at a time, she said that after she graduated from high school, she joined the Army during World War II where she worked as a clerk. After I exclaimed admiration for this, she said that her service was nothing since people like her brother actually fought in the war. I shared that my mother's sisters were married to veterans of that war. Additionally one of these uncles and my father also served during the Korean Conflict. "Within feminist methodologies, researchers are encouraged to locate themselves, to share personal aspects of their own experience with research participants." (Wilson, 2008, p.110)

I know from my father that *everyone* in our military served honorably and was important, regardless of the type of duties they may have performed. Sometime later when there was a special on PBS on Native Americans' service in WWII, I made a VHS copy to bring to the seniors. The day I brought it for her, she sat right down to watch it at the center. She thanked me for thinking of her, and that watching it brought back fond memories for her of her beloved brother. She never volunteered what had become of him, and I always tried to tread carefully in our conversations, never wanting to ask questions that perhaps were best left unanswered.

Her pony beading companion was Zelda who had a more poignant upbringing. Where Peggy had a cane for support, Zelda had a walker. When Peggy talked about finishing high school, Zelda volunteered that she was done with school in the ninth grade. After that she began working in *white* (her words) peoples' homes as a cleaning lady. (Later as I got to know these

women more, they appeared to tread more carefully around the word *white* to embrace my identification as non-Native.) She worked her whole life until she could clean no more, and came back to her tribal nation. Through Qwin I learned that Zelda had had children throughout her life who she sent back to relatives in her tribal nation to raise. Many looked askew at this pattern in her life. As women, I said later to Qwin, I would wonder how old she was when she was first pregnant and under what circumstances. I would imagine a 14-year old cleaning a stranger's house could have been easily preyed upon. (This was not the first time, nor would it be the last time, that I knew of someone having a child at such a young age.) Much later I would learn that as Zelda's health required an assisted-care facility. The first child she had given away 75 years ago was caring for her mother and paying for all of her bills. Compassionate caring had transcended past circumstances.

Peggy is now house-bound in her senior apartment where her daughter now visits quite often. Frequently I would see them together at meals. From our conversations, I knew the renewed closeness of her daughter after the death of Peggy's spouse meant everything to her. When I first began visiting the seniors, and Zelda and Peggy in particular, I was encouraged by others to get permission to tape our conversations, so that I might have a more accurate record of what transpired. However, as emphasized by Patton (2002, p.308), tape recorders may become conspicuous and constrain contributor replies and put a rapid conclusion to any discussion. I resisted this idea greatly, and although I acquiesced the first time, I felt a type of vindication on hearing the playback at home. The tv, radio, other seniors' talking had made the recording unusable. I was delighted since some of the research that I had reviewed, specifically mentioned not doing this. I wanted to respect those who had agreed to talk to me (and keep them anonymous), as well as keeping their words and stories sacred—for that moment in time only.

Their stories were held in esteem, as they confirmed my understanding while helping as a teaching tool that contributes to supporting others with inspiration. (Brown & Strega, 2005, p. 252) For participants coming from a background of historically traumatic events in their lives “storytelling is also a tool of resistance.” (Ibid)

A revision to the interview process was incorporated that had a more Indigenous “understanding of knowledge exchange in which the knowledge holder determines what is shared, what is important to be shared and at what time.” (Ray, 2012, p. 94) Participants had control over what they contributed and their identities were shielded and remained anonymous. In desiring to engage in research with those of Indigenous heritage, it was important for me to incorporate a decolonizing approach where relationality inside the investigative process is valued. “The decolonizing embodiment is a holistically layered process where theoretical positioning intersects profoundly with the personal conflicts of navigating two distinctive worlds.” (Kovach, 2013, p. 83) When taking into consideration the traversing of different realities, one must remember that there will be a space that embraces Indigenous heritage while also being part of a larger dominant society that is not welcoming. The whole is *other* than the sum of the parts, especially when a crucial part is a distinct cultural identity.

Reflection is an integral process as one shares space with women opening up their lived experiences for scrutiny and examination. “The scale of human misery that Native peoples have endured since colonization and that many continue to confront on a daily basis is difficult to comprehend and accept among non-Natives.” (Walters, et al., 2009, p 155) These elder women of Indigenous heritage were not waiting to be asked about their lives. They are private people who shared their personal stories. For that I will always have profound respect and gratitude.

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Education & Indigenous Women

This paper comes from my internal headnotes of confusion regarding educational theories that I learned in grad school; feminist and gender/women's studies; and my real experienced live in interaction with others—especially elder Indigenous women. I was taught respect for my elders which served me well when I wanted to explore elder women's engagement in cultural activities. I started back to grad school in my early 50's, so the older women I met saw me as younger since they were in their 70's through 90's. They saw what I was doing as commendable where others saw me as a dreamer; someone who never learns (thank you *Radiohead*), and never learned *her* place.

The United States is known as a country that worships youth. Throughout the life course the ageing process is viewed as having a greater impact on women as they age than men. We now share the legacy of age bias with the aboriginal peoples of this land. Native American Indians, as they aged, were held in high esteem in their tribal nations. These elders were respected for the very journey they had made throughout their lives. The Lakota peoples, for example, honored the way lines became prominent on elders. They saw this as their lives slowly becoming one with their environment. Just as they saw lines among the rock formation of the mountains, so were these lines shown on the faces of their older members. They saw this as a wonderful achievement and gift to see life to old age, and to take on a look reflective of their beloved Black Hills.

The United States has a long history of oppression, control, and subjection of many factions within its borders. There have been a myriad of justifications for these practices. Prominent among these groups are women. Women in the United States face economic disparities at a higher percentage than their male counterparts. This is especially true as women

proceed in their journey through the life span. It is most notable as they age in our society. I am often conflicted regarding feminism, women's/gender studies, aging, and Indigeneity.

There is little mention that the precursor to feminism's first wave movement in the mid-19th century (started in Seneca Falls, New York) was the women of the *Haudenosaunee* or Iroquois *Confederacy*. These indigenous women were the first known in our country to have equal status and regard with the males in their tribal nation. In fact, having established a matrilineal line many years previously, these women of the *Five* (later Six) *Nations* were located in a powerful position within their communities. Only with the interference of the European colonists did these women lose their positions. Members of certain tribal villages expected through their life's journey to be educating themselves. As they accumulated the years, their status as *elders* would be respected and regarded.

In my view, there needs to be added discussion of the failure of many feminists to address this dearth of aging theories. The National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) convention for 2010 was a continuation of the theme: *Difficult Dialogues*. Among the issues to be addressed were those affecting indigenous and aging populations. Although there is an aging caucus within NWSA, only one session during the four-day convention addressed aging issues; and that session was poorly attended. A scholar of Sami descent (arctic indigenous peoples from Sweden to Russia) addressed the first assemblage of the convention. Afterward only a couple of attendees ventured to engage in conversation with her. I had seen her before she talked since I recognized her cultural attire. She told me afterward how sadly self-involved many seemed around her; the lack of intellectual curiosity and engagement disappointed her. Feminists should expand their range of intellectual pursuits to include, when addressing those among us that are marginalized and disenfranchised, the elderly and those of aboriginal origins.

Our society tends to consider members of our older populations, as well as those with aboriginal ancestors, as *other* than ourselves. When considering the experiences of older female Native Americans, art can be seen as an integral part of many of their experiences throughout the lifespan. Integration of cultural experiences familiar to elder women of aboriginal descent can further act as way to honor, respect, and value their lived lives.

I read an article a few years back where activist Cynthia Rich is incredulous at our society's continued pervasive, dismissive attitude toward women as they age. Twenty-seven years ago she wrote an article addressing the treatment and status of ageing women in our country. Now that she has joined that group, she sees an urgent need for academia to develop a theoretical base to address the inequities. What do feminists think they will be one day? It's almost comical to someone like me that has been engaged with elder people throughout my life. This is the social legacy wrought in our society. Many indigenous nations held older members in high esteem, possessing great status in their communities

Researchers outside the borders of the United States have investigated issues regarding elder indigenous populations. An intersectional perspective, old women's narratives are important because they show the complexities of being old, indigenous, and woman. Oral histories and narratives have gained a wide acceptance as an invaluable research tool outside of our borders. (I just wondered can these Indigenous women's narrations, through the lens of their non-native interviewers, be used in my research? Also, if they can, can I find this one article from my memory again?)

Indigenous knowledge and previously established matriarchal social structures often appear to go unacknowledged in some of the feminist research I have read while in grad school. Though Florence R. Krall developed a new form of curriculum inquiry in which feminist themes, ecological metaphors, and autobiographical methods were linked through observation of

interrelationships between the Navajo and their reservation home. Real, meaningful dialogue and policies need to be promoted to put forth constructive means to heal some of these resulting consequences of oppression. All of these can be utilized in developing theory regarding the journey of older, indigenous women and their educational experiences.

I laughed out loud when I read about the astonishment of the researchers conducting studies, and one person in particular, wanted to account for older adults talking as if they are not older adults through the use of positioning theory to view the conversations of older adults that do not fit preconceived age stereotypes. I see the use of social position on the part of the interviewers on their subjects as a subjective, biased point of reference. This appears to conflict with the study of elder women when the emphasis is apparently on the perception of the researchers, although the author stated that she was merely demonstrating that positioning theory can be a fruitful analytic technique within discursive gerontology—to defend herself.

Having interviewed many female oldsters from large homogenous, as well as diverse ethnic groupings, I have experienced the sensitivity that is felt by many females to resist the labels often described on surveys or in study questions. Self-identification should be respected without having to take a stance that a participant is not behaving/identifying per the researcher's expectations. Some of the research I have read states that this is in contrast to other identifiers such as gender, I take issue with this assumption since there can be many aspects and stances to one's gendered identity. A person can obfuscate their age, but internally can do little to escape it.

I still take issue with feminist theory as older women appear less visible in gender theory, and their voices not heard in research. Feminist theory seeks to give voice to those otherwise not heard, yet are neglecting an ever-growing segment of our population. If feminists do not respond to this need, this segment of our society may continually be neglected and suffer from the

prejudices that accompany women as they age. This is more so for Indigenous female elders whose ancestors often held positions of esteem within their communities during times past. The status of these women needs to be addressed and honored.

I recall a class where I was criticized as wanting to that which was deemed merely *identity research* with little hope of tangible resolution. There is a weakness and continuation of unacknowledged bias of the examination of social constructs. There is nothing wrong in my mind to have the passion and energy to approach research from a difference perspective.

There continues to be a limited amount of study regarding the educational and life experiences of elder indigenous females. As I have aged I have looked at my interests and myself differently, and have had to rethink my many identities. I am learning to reconceptualize and tell stories from a renewed standpoint empowered by the many changes age confers.



Turtle clan pony bead wall hanging made by WWII vet

Forgiveness story

“...To forgive means pardoning the unpardonable...Hope means hoping when everything seems hopeless.”

G. K. Chesterton (English Critic, Essayist, Novelist and Poet, 1874-1936)

Native Americans have struggled regarding the education they experience in the United States. Begun in the nineteenth century, Indian boarding school education was seen as a device for forcing the assimilation of Indian children into the majority's social system. The impact of this history on Native Americans' education is evident in their pursuit of a higher education. Of the less than 40% that complete the 12th grade, fewer than 20% begin college. Only 20% continue their undergraduate studies after the first year. These present-day implications are staggering. Words like intergenerational trauma and soul wounds come to light. What has happened in the past has a profound and last effort in our present.

Native American children were forced by the U.S. government to attend boarding schools. Their culture, their ways of managing resources, their very modes of dress and housing were under attack. Much was made of their outward expressions of their cultural identity: their hair and clothing. Names given to them by their families were deemed inappropriate and new names were fostered upon them by the officials at the Indian schools. All of this happened in a place where their tribal language was discouraged by any means possible.

The 1879-2009 Wellbreity Journey for Forgiveness took place May 16- June 21, 2009.

Conducted by White Bison, Inc., they actively engaged in the process of healing the legacy of the boarding schools with Native American Indians. While they unsuccessfully petitioned for a formal apology from the U.S. government to Native Americans for these abuses, they developed a constructive outlet to promote forgiveness—to move beyond this unresolved grief that still permeates their communities. Through forgiveness they hope to promote healing and advancement beyond

their shared intergenerational trauma. They conducted a 24-stop journey in the western part of the United States until they reached, at their 24th stop, the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C.

“Wellbreity means to be both sober and well.” (WhiteBison, retrieved from <http://www.whitebison.org/>.) The Wellbreity Movement began as a pathway to healing through a return to traditional cultural customs and practices that had traditionally been passed on by their tribal elders. Their teaching categories include a Healing Forest Model where a person’s roots can be transformed “into the Four Gifts of Forgiving the Unforgivable, Healing, Unity, and Hope.” (Ibid.)

While interviewing an elder group of native women engaged in the creation/re-engagement of cultural items, my next question asked if they had been taught by their families. It was the catalyst for heart-wrought discussions. One of the women spoke of how her mother was forced to take her to the Indian boarding school at the age of five. Her mother never visited, and began a life outside separate from the child she was forbidden to raise. This young child was compelled to make beadwork for the missionary leaders of the school to sell. She stayed there for years, and when given the opportunity, went the Midwest to complete her education. She did return to her tribal nation upon marriage.

These older women shared being alienated with their parents. They were disengaged from their children as they emphasized the value of an education and occupational achievement. Many stated how their children were ‘workaholics’. Some had children resent their work ethic. They now embraced the ‘American Dream’, but it resulted in estrangement from *their* children. This irony was not lost on them. They never had closeness with their families due to the schooling system. Now, as a result of their assimilation, they raised their children to be too busy to interact with them.

To encourage American Indian students to excel and continue with a higher education, our system of education needs to be culturally sensitive and aware of their needs. Advocates are needed

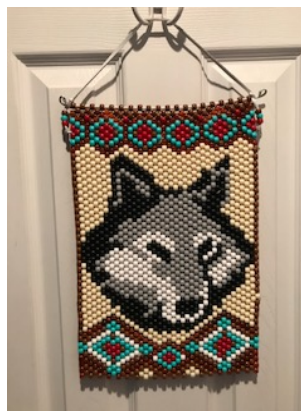
to emphasize access and initiatives for assistance in overcoming barriers to higher education.

Acknowledgement should be made of the influence culture, ethnic, and racial identities have on educational attainment. Real, meaningful dialogue and policies need to be promoted and put forth.

Sadly I know this is a dream with little chance of being realized.

During this trek, I was present at one of their stops. Some may call it serendipity, but to me, it was meant to be that I was present. Many of those wonderful seniors who experienced trauma spoke about beginning anew with their healing. Others spoke of the horrible events at these institutions and the resulting continued pattern of loss in their lives. If not for meeting these open elder Indigenous women engaged in craft work, I might have never known about this national campaign to resolve the suffering started at these educational institutions. Perhaps by healing their identity with visits to the historical educational places from their past, they can find a space that will now promote positive learning experiences for new generations. This sounds formal and possible, but I know that for many of the women that I have known, this is not a possibility.

They have experienced forgiveness, but the lasting loss can never be recovered. As my dear friend told me when describing an intense family sorrow, she is tired. She is tired after a long life of separation, sorrow, and loss. Although I remember her in my prayers, I know that perhaps her cup is full, and she is weary from this all. Forgiveness, yes, but *hope* is hard to hold on to...



Wolf clan pony bead wall hanging

Spirit/energy Quilt story

The soul wound is the physical, psychological and spiritual damage which is the direct and residual result of the mass genocide and colonization campaign that followed the initial contact between Indigenous peoples and invading Europeans that was perpetuated by early Americans. It is the result of the shameful history of persecution of Native peoples which continues to this day. For simplistic examples one need to look no further than the little jerk mascot for Cleveland's major league baseball team, and well as the embolden pro football team, the Washington Racial Slurs. Indigenous Americans are affected today not only by continuing actions of oppression by society, but also by intergenerational trauma. This is the trauma of over five hundred years of oppression that has been instilled and passed from generation to generation. It is not genetic ailment, though passed from families and friends on to the next generation through behaviors observed. Today Native peoples in the U.S. are still exposed to a great many injustices, and thus it remains one of the principle reasons that they are unable to heal from this *wound*. The fact that the holocaust committed against American Indian peoples has yet to be acknowledged by most of the world and certainly not the United States remains a principle impediment to the healing process.

Yes, it bothered me that the Supreme Court of the US, in a decision made with their newest member, seems to empower powerful professional sports organizations to continue to use Indigenuity as a commodity. In this vein I write my thoughts, thinking on the wonderful Native elder women that I can call friend and have shared their lives with me. I title this story *Spirit/energy Quilt* since I have felt that from the first quilt I was given to a conversation this year with a fellow advisor in my university department.

Its not like I've been given a lot of quilts--three to be exact. The first one was given to me by the mother of my college roommate, who happened to be Mennonite. I was taken back and overwhelmed by the gift. It was a lovely black and white quilt with delicate and colorful flowered fabric incorporated. Unfortunately I actually used the quilt on my bed for many years so it retains little of its original luster. I was ignorant at the time of the weight of this gift, and can say that although I showed my appreciation, I was clueless regarding how honored I should have been by receiving it. I can try to excuse myself by saying I came from practical people, but really, how practical am I?

The second quilt I was given was a lap quilt by a dear friend that I met through my research watching elder Indigenous women engaged in cultural activities. When she said she had something for me, and I opened it, I never would have imagined that she was giving me one of the quilts she had made. I actually got lightheaded. Its based on 'primitive' folk art which they were working on as a group, and I just adore it. I have it mounted on a wall on the landing between floors where I touch it and think of her & her family--a tangible reminder of this astonishing woman.

The third quilt I received was made by my dearest friend that I met while exploring venues where elder women displayed their quilts in West Virginia. Talk about serendipity! As I asked her about her quilt at the program, she noticed my earrings (made by an Indigenous woman.) When I told her where and when I got them, she said that her and her partner spent time living near a tribal nation while her partner completed their graduate education. I noticed her last name and said that I had a child in college with a professor with the same last name as hers, any relation? She laughed and said, yes, that professor comes home to her every nite! They have both become the dearest friends to my little family. Though my son was put off at

first that my closet friend was the partner of his professor, he now says what he would have missed, had he not gotten the chance to know the professor apart from their role in higher education. It was a lucky day indeed for me.

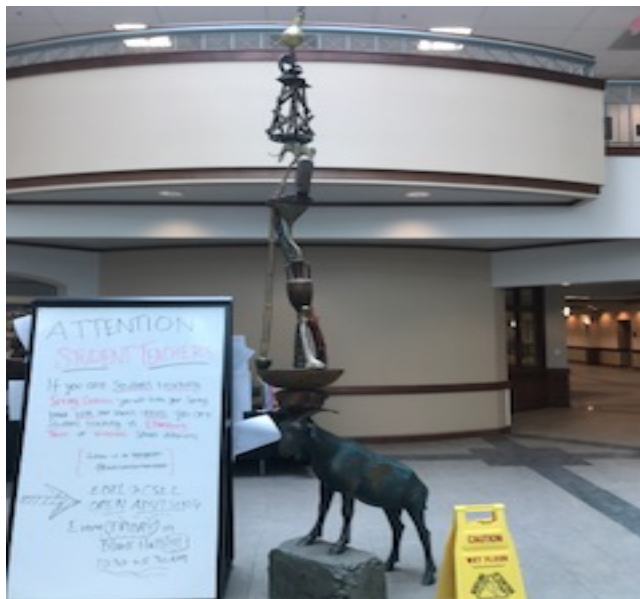
When I had the good fortune, and the money available via student loans, to go to Alaska for an immersion experience one summer, my dearest friend made me a lap quilt of scenes from Alaska to commemorate it. She brought it with her when I had the opportunity to speak about my experiences in a public forum at my university. I was in shock and awe of her awesome gift. I keep it on a wall in our living area where I add their holiday card each year to that I can see their smiling faces all year long with a lucky horse that they have cared for, for many years.

Having both of these are reminders of love, friendship, and the value of others in our home. I can touch them and think of these dear people. When I started my new position at a university in the northwest as an advisor, I initially started in my department's main building (though I am now in an office in a building of one of the two programs that I serve.) My new colleagues would take time to train me on various things or share insights on ways to approach challenges with the position.

One such professional and pleasant colleague had me come into her office where she had a lit candle (electric), a wonderful scent to her room, snacks available for students in a basket, and relaxing music playing. She said that, like me, she had student she served in the sciences, so they often benefited from a welcoming, relaxing environment. Displayed on one wall was a magnificent quilt. After I received permission to take a photo, I asked if I might touch just a corner of it lightly. She instantly agreed and shared that she believed that there was an *energy* in each quilt she made. As she thought of the person she was making it for, she felt their *spirit* as

part of quilt—integral to the process. I shared that I too felt an energy/spirit from the quilts I had received, and that viewing or touching them brought remembrance of them.

Who would think that I would come two thousand miles from home to a new position, and meet such a sensitive and positive soul. Moments like this made me feel like this was indeed where I belonged, and that it was no mere coincidence to met such a kindred spirit in a colleague.



Goat does balancing act!! at my current school

Advisor as Educator/Interceder

Advisors definitely are educators as we lead the way regarding the many facets of college life that await incoming students. We are the first line in practical assistance with background on possible majors, course requirements, and schedule planning. At least the type of advisor that myself and my colleagues are.

In this position we are also educators in the conventional sense as instructors for an introductory course regarding our university. Since I taught a similar course at West Virginia University, I don't have many qualms regarding that challenge. I do need to explore the course content (there is no manual to go by here) and also find out exactly where they find the material for their weekly lessons. Another hurdle for me will be learning their form of e-Campus which took awhile for me to 'master' at WVU. Keeping it simple helped, and I most enjoyed teaching when I could do a hybrid course that contained components of the physical classroom and the ease of use regarding online assignments for students. This is learning that I will have to acquire within the next few months as our fall quarter starts at the end of September.

Tomorrow I have another freshman orientation, and although a few have said to me that they would not want to do my specific job, due to the many majors under the umbrella of the engineering technologies, I don't mind the difficulty. This is in light of the fact that I also am advisor for another program broadly stated as family and consumer sciences. I must say that I was surprised at the last one-on-one meeting that I had with my supervisor where he stated that I had the largest case load of any other advisor in his department. Wow, I didn't think to ask how many students I must have now since I know from before the number was over 700, with 75% of the students in the technology fields.

Tomorrow is the long day out of the two day freshman orientations where we work from 8 a.m. to approximately 7 p.m. I was so stressed for the first series last week which also included a separate day for transfer orientations. My biggest concern is always being able to assist the students and answer their questions in a knowledgeable manner. I am receiving an education as an advisor along with my students! I keep reassuring myself that *next* summer this will be less formidable for me, though I know I will be far from an expert at what this position entails by then.

Advisor as interceder is something I've thought about as I negotiate for some students with faculty or staff. I research their background and try to come up with scenarios and possible solutions for their academic dilemmas. My goal is to be cordial and respectful of faculty so that I may approach them regarding students' issues. In my attempts to problem solve for students, I strive to approach my position in a professional and approachable manner. I would like those I interact with on a daily basis to feel at ease with me, knowing that I will try my best to be responsible and responsive to their needs or requests.

I had a student that was having great difficulty getting a response from an instructor. I told the student that I would approach said instructor on their behalf, but they could not exhibit the frustration toward the instructor that they had shown to me. My office is a safe space for students where what they say is private and between us. This student was telling me of their disappointment which was understandable. I wanted to model for my student that although they were annoyed, it was best to be diplomatic when trying to make progress with an instructor. It certainly worked this time, and I was happy to see a satisfactory resolution. I did caution my student that this might not always be the outcome, but may be best to approach these academic quandaries with restraint and in a positive manner. This specific student had their doubts, but did

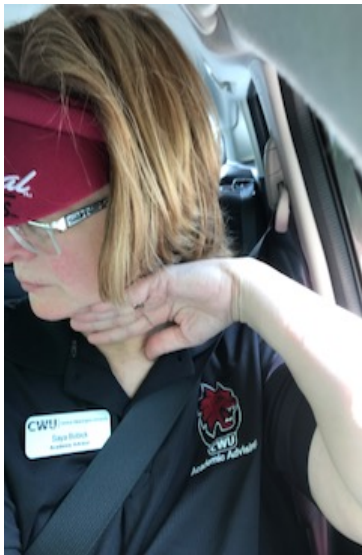
come back and high-five me when it all worked out. I know this doesn't always happen though I was glad it did this time!

I have other students' information on my desk at this time that I must intercede for in various ways. Some are international students from around our world: Japan, Korea (I'm sure South, lol), Vietnam, Saudi Arabia, and so on. Each student has specific needs that must be addressed as it pertains to their specific majors. It can be complex at times regarding course equivalencies and comparison with curriculum in other countries. I think this is part of the reason that a few have said that they don't envy me my job.

During spring quarter I met a student of mine that was back to school as a non-traditional student. This student was in my age cohort (let me talk fancy for a minute), and was surprised to met me. They told me of another woman in administration on campus with a similar background as mine—nontraditional, degree-seeking, and had spent a significant amount of time as a single parent. My student was someone with a large family from an agricultural background. This region is the number one producer of timothy hay in the world. Crops produced in the area include apples and grapes (for wine production.) Crop production is part of the reason many former migrant workers have established families in this reason.

My student said that although farming gave them the ability to have a family, they always wanted to earn a degree in a technology field and eventually look for employment there. I complimented him and mentioned that I am example of someone who is following a similar path as they. They said that their children are astonished at what they have learned and retained, and they are enjoying the ability to impress through their educational pursuits.

Although I have been in my advising position for a short time I realized early on that I not only advise, but act as educator and interceder for many of my students, as the need arises. These can bring daily challenges to the job that leaves me frustrated at times, since I'll start to feel that I'll never really learn everything that I need to know. Then other days I am thrilled to confront obstacles as I try to solve their many puzzles. I think at times I am happiest researching since I do like to problem solve. It gives me satisfaction that my everyday life was lacking. I am now free for this period of time in my life to do what I'd like to do. I have a unique opportunity to assist others while using my education. I try to grasp onto these good feelings and embrace them. My, how my life has changed in a year!



A hot summer day during new student orientation

Dams Story

When I first had the opportunity to meet with elder Indigenous women at their senior center I did do a modicum of background research. I learned that there were a variety of facts and restraints placed on them by the actions of our government. One of the most appalling was the building of dams either on traditional tribal nation lands or on waterways that interacted with a main food source for many Native peoples. It is difficult to represent to Indigenous peoples the very people that have caused so much harm to them.

Dam projects in the often took tribal lands from Native peoples when there were viable options to be considered. Their lands were flooded often with little regard for the ancestor homes of Native peoples or their belongings, as well as their food sources. Peter LaFarge in a song made famous by Johnny Cash spoke to the broken promises, broken treaties between our first president and the Seneca Nation of Indians in western New York.

Take a ride through these lands you can now see the total disregard given to their Native nation and their past relatives. When moving grave sites before flooding the land, the Army Corp of Engineers often combined remains to place in a mass grave with little thought to the individual people. Belongings were often taken from homes to be flood and buried in a large mound where no one would be able to recover or use the items afterward. It is depressing to ride through these lands and look at these markers in the presence of a Seneca elder that lived through these events. I steeled myself to know that I did not have the luxury to cry in this person's presence since it was not my home and those of my kinship destroyed. It was the government and the people from the past that I represent as a non-Native that wrought such destruction.

This spurred me on to investigate more about dams in the United States. When I drove cross-country to present at my first national conference in Portland, Oregon, I made a point to stop where Celilo Falls used to be in near the border of Washington state and Oregon. Now decimated due to the building of the Dalles Dam, it was a major source of tribal fishing for salmon. The falls are now silenced and the fish come no more. Salmon had traveled there for centuries to be stopped forever due to manmade interference.

Salish peoples of the Pacific Northwest used salmon as well as sturgeon and steelhead as part of their ancestral healthy diet. We often hear of the health benefits of salmon. For many of these people access to the main part of their diet is no more. Though dam projects now try to incorporate fish ladders, for some Native peoples their traditional food source will never return.

As an example, the Grand Coulee Dam in Washington State permanently ended fish migration for local Native peoples. The extinction of these spawning areas not only interrupted their food source, but also their way of life. Part of their cultural was to celebrate the coming of the first fish. Now they have ceremonies to mourn the loss of this traditional way of life.

Through damming projects there has been loss of habitat, wetlands, tribal grounds, and ancestral burial sites. Our country has compensated some tribal nations though they can never come back to the traditional way of life passed from generation to generation.

I took a Native science course at WVU that used Winona LaDuke's book, *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life*. I wept as I read about thousands of caribou losing their lives as their migratory patterns were forever disturbed by outsider interference. Caribou, a traditional food source for many Indigenous people, wiped out in the thousands from no planning for foresight regarding the animals with which we share our world.

Reading this made me reflect on my herding ancestors that used caribou for a food source, transportation, and fur. I know through reading other stories that these Eurasian herding peoples are have issues with climate change destroying habitat and losing caribou from the thinning ice. Grim realities for us all to reflect on.

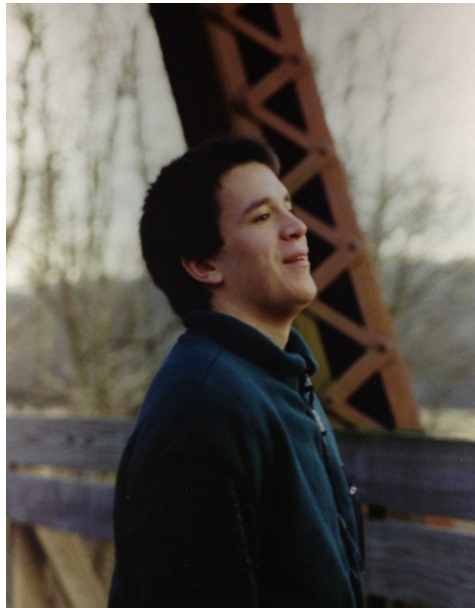
One semester when I taught women's and gender studies I used the film *Waterbusters*, about the Berthold Reservation in North Dakota being flooded for a dam in the 1940s and the resulting implications. Since I integrated science and Indigenous aspects to the curriculum at times, I found this to be an important focal point for discussion on what does it mean to be marginalized in America; how are people truly disenfranchised in our country? Without educating ourselves we are not able to make real substantive progress in our lives and the lives of others.

Learning about dams and their impact in America was a journey that has taken me to different books, films and resources. I have spent time during the years researching histories with all the impacts on ecosystems and Native peoples. The destruction made in wake of these dams is something that has impacted me through the years. Now that I am in the Pacific Northwest I hope to continue my education on these projects. I would like to visit and touch the places that surround these dams, though not the structures themselves. Like Mount Rushmore, I am happiest away from these structures.

I want to add a poignant coda to my research on dams. A few years back I found a wonderful resource with vast information and research sources on dams in the western part of our country. That a college group under the direction of a professor gathered such useful information was impressive. I used to refer to their work now and again to read more.

One day I came toward the end of their information where they listed the various research teams used to gather these brilliant facts, references, and links. I was shocked to see the name of my own nephew among the students. Over five years ago he came to live with us for a short period of time. I couldn't wait to tell him of my astonishment and wonder at all the valuable explorations they had conducted. It was beyond impressive.

I am happy that I had this opportunity to tell him of my admiration for their college research project. It is a touching reminder and a heartwarming memory of a dear nephew that passed away too soon...



A.

Boarding Schools and Native Americans story

Historical trauma and unresolved historical grief may have contributed to educational difficulties. For Native Americans, historical trauma is not merely a matter of painful memories. The kind of suffering that Indigenous peoples have had to endure continues to the current day. Historical or intergenerational trauma on people of Native American heritage “manifests itself in the social and personal issues prevalent in our communities including substance abuse, mental health problems, domestic violence, child abuse, depression, anger, and loneliness.” (Connecting Circles of Care, Inc., 2015, p.1) While these are consequences that may be perpetuated in any community, they often resonate with those marginalized by a dominant society. Their ability to survive and thrive showcases their resiliency despite or in view of their circumstances.

A significant name in the field of feminist studies is Peggy McIntosh, who has commented (2005) on a need for a gendered perspective on education for citizens of our world. McIntosh asserts (p.398) that a global sense of belonging can be developed locally by teachers who bring their emotions and talents into the classroom to help students cultivate their own capacities and acquire responsiveness that is important for the future development of the students. This is important when remembering those forced into Indian boarding schools as well as students I can meet as an educator and advisor.

Many Indigenous peoples desire to keep alive both customs and traditional knowledge for themselves and subsequent generations. The attempts at cultural genocide or, *ethnocide* have failed to work in the past or in the present day. To have had the opportunity to view the Wellbriety Journey of Forgiveness in its attempts to heal Indigenous peoples from the legacy of Indian boarding schools was a privilege. Former students, or captives as they perhaps should be more rightly called, recounted their struggles, challenges and enduring impact of this traumatic

forced education in public forums. Some did not wish to share which was the approach of my dear friend. She chose not to attend the event, so we met her afterward at the senior center.

Talking about these horrors from the past brought back other painful memories for my other dear friend, who was the instructor of the crafting group. She was experiences these hurts all over again and their long-reaching ramifications. She said that only through the grace of her faith was she able to overcome and function as well as she could.

Although most of the elder women I met embraced Christianity, there was a reverence held for the faith and belief of their ancestors. I attended a training aided by White Bison where members of this old faith came to bless the participants. First of all, as a non-Native, by law, I can never possess an eagle feather. Believe me I was not going to pass up an opportunity for a blessing where you are touched by such a feather. I thanked them afterward for including anyone that wanted to be in their circle of grace. I was honored to share that experience.

Internalized oppression is a tool employed by dominant societies to continue officious policies perpetrated on those marginalized or disenfranchised. Such was the justification for Indian boarding schools. “Historical narcissism (the belief that one’s own system of thinking must be used to validate other cultural belief systems) continues to be an issue in the relationship between Native/Original People and those who hold power in the academic and clinical life-world.” (Duran, et al., 2008, p.291)

Our country has done little to acknowledge or heal the trauma perpetuated by Indian boarding schools. It is not that way with our neighbor to the north. In 1998, Canadian government officials apologized to First Nations residential school survivors for the widespread physical and sexual abuse that occurred and allocated \$350 million for counseling as a gesture of reconciliation to First Nations people. (Colmant et al., 2004, p.23) Though there are still many

issues between Canada and their Indigenous population, they have made these attempts at positive change.

Scholars have emphasized that Indian boarding schools are a prime example of the damaging and disparaging efforts by the federal government to require integration while disregarding the individual Native child or their families and communities in an effort at cultural genocide. (Burich, 2007, p.93) Parents and students were told that they were to have little or no future contact at many of these Indian boarding schools, and that the parents were coerced to relinquish their rights to their children once they were enrolled at the school.

Recollections from elder Natives, like those made during the Wellbriety events, are most poignant in their retelling of the horror of being torn from their loved ones as part of the forced attendance. These survivors were never able to return to their ancestral home throughout their education into adulthood. Some were not able to come back until much later in their lives. Forced assimilation never erased the desire to be among family, social community, or to be part of their traditional ways, whether Native Americans in the lower 48 or with Alaskan Natives.

The children, who are now adults, surviving these experiences continue to hold onto these traumas through their mind, bodies, and spirit. As a non-Native permitted into spaces graciously by survivors of this forced schooling, I am in awe of their resilience and ability for many to have meaningful and productive lives. Not necessarily productive in Western terms, but productive in their re-embracing of their culture and communities; meaningful in the way that they chose to live their lives in an inclusive manner. I can truly never express my thanks enough to them for allowing me into their lives, and sharing their memories, hopes, and joys.

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Horse story

I used to have a vision when I was young of a white horse with wings. When I went back to graduate school, I stumbled upon a dissertation from Canada talking about such a horse vision (I was researching horse masks for a class.) The research paper was authored by an Indigenous person from Canada who said their First Nations culture considered it an unfortunate omen.

Through my master's degree research I met a wonderful woman with a connection to WVU, and she happened to own a horse. I would later learn the help and compassion she and her partner showed this horse echoed throughout their lives. They reach out to assist those in need, whether a person or an animal--two of the most compassionate people I have ever met.

I took a course in graduate school on Indigenous art history and had to pick a topic. Mine was horse masks as used in Native North American visual culture. The horse was an important, helpful, and integral part of many tribal nations' past. The artistic embellishments utilized in the making of horses' masks bear witness to the importance of expression integrated with their culture. The variety of unique techniques and design knowledge applied to these masks served as tangible representations and connections to the past.

Horse masks are esteemed for their aesthetic; invoking intergenerational pride and hope. Native Americans have attempted to reestablish their tribal nations' identities while employing, with varying degrees of success, the assertion that *they* are the dominant voice in their affairs. Their culture and origin—using their own methods of knowing—are to be respected and valued.

The earliest known examples of equine facial coverings were chanfrons. These protective masks/face guards for the horse's head were made of formed metal and leather. They were used by Eurasian cavalry as early as 500 B.C., until the 17th century when the horse was

reintroduced in the Americas. These early examples were uncovered intact in burial mounds, called kurgans, in the Altai Mountains of central Asia/southern Siberia. Since I have a paternal ancestor from the herding peoples in Siberia, this resonated with me.

Some of the horses found in these intact, well-preserved burial mounds were wearing masks. These masks uncovered in burial mounds in Russia exhibited a connection between religious relict and ancient deer breeding. Horse masks represented mythological classification systems used by animal breeders.

While researching North American Indians use of horse masks, some distantly related, divergent information was revealed. Throughout Europe remnants of old non-Christian ceremonies exist in myth, folklore, song, and dance. One type of ceremony brought to the New World by European colonist used hobby-horses, an animal disguise worn or carried in a ceremony. Just as indigenous peoples of North America's Northwest region and Arctic used masks representative of animals, Europeans apparently had traditions involving horse masks.

In a sermon, St. Augustine was to have made this statement regarding the degenerate nature of the horse mask. To prohibit the use of a secular animal in a representative mask led to its evolution into the non-threatening hobby-horse. Odd to contemplate that the very practice North American aboriginal peoples performed and were severely criticized for, were actually previously conducted in European countries.

Growing up I loved my hobby horse and longed to have the real thing. Naively I said to my parents that I no longer wanted any gifts for any reason. I just wanted a horse. One day my father sat me down and explained logically why this would never be a reality. Instead of despair

came quiet resignation. My education both in and out of the classroom had come full circle. Hopes and dreams weren't for people like me--those of us who truly see through a glass darkly.

This research on horse masks for my class augmented my educational interest in gender, diversity, and socio-economic issues. I remain interested in issues/concerns of native elder women as they reconnect to artistic endeavors once considered an integral part of their culture. Through this I have acquired a more multifaceted understanding of visual culture. While I have always appreciated the handiwork and skills of artistic women and men, I have little or no interest (or talent) in trying to emulate or acquire even a rudimentary proficiency in an artistic undertaking. My art, if you can call it that, is quiet and introspective; an interior art that is expressed through my life and my work.

When I first came to the university where I now work, one of the first sights I held was a magnificent horse sculpture on campus. When I sent a photo to my friends (the ones with the horse), they knew the artist immediately. My friends said they heard that one of these horse sculptures was on a college campus somewhere in the US. They were astounded that it was here!

There have been barriers present in my life along with the occasional horse representation. So I acknowledge dwelling in these margins, in these uncomfortable spaces; in a space occupied by many. As the song says, let your feelings go, but never your *mask*. I continue to struggle to tell my stories bit by bit without letting go of the facade. Adversity weaves its thread to connect events, both painful and positive in life. My faith; my spirit; my medicine bag of hope is with me always.

Alaskan Natives: subsistence; boarding schools; TB story

I took Native American art history class that unfolded in many ways for me. If I get an opportunity I would like to write about how this developed into an interest in Yup'ik dance fans or finger fans. I will also try to wrap into another story my interest in horses and horse masks as a means of artistic expression.

During this class we viewed the film *Uksuum Cauyai: The Drums of Winter*. It was quite the education for me in class that day. I was actually horrified to know that the church, the religion of my youth, was integrated into many Alaskan Native communities. Horrified because I got to hear how the church in some of these communities were content to allow villagers in the past to starve during the winter by reciting pat phrases like God helps those that help themselves (not Biblical, by the way), and that to each according to their ability. Where people like the Yup'iks were used to helping those in the winters that could not do for themselves. I was mortified and ashamed.

After taking this illuminating class I found out through serendipity or happenstance that there was a university sponsored immersion trip to an Alaskan bush village including travel in mainland Alaska also. I was able to obtain student loan monies for that summer to take advantage of this once in my lifetime opportunity.

Native Alaskan values reflect upon the religious and educational exposure and experiences many Native Americans have endured. Just as Native Americans had no formal means of ownership with land, this is similar to Native Alaskans. This was cause for opportunistic and exploitative measures taken by the invasive outsiders. They forced their concepts of rights/title/possession in these geographic locations to perpetuate their sense of

entitlement. To paraphrase Howard Zinn in *A Peoples History of the United States*: Christopher Columbus wrote that the Indians they encountered, with their openness, largess, and notion of sharing what they had with others (in his words, the living embodiment of Christianity), made them ideal candidates for enslavement. He then continued in his correspondence to state that through his *faith* he has victory over them. (Zinn, 2003, p.3-4) Just as many were oppressed using this type of justification of faith in the lower 48, so it was with those in Alaska.

In West Virginia University's Native American art history course, we were taught that the concept of shamanism originated with ancient cultures that traveled through what is now known as Siberia. (Berlo and Phillips, 1998, p.26) My dad's father was from herding peoples originating from Siberia. Their close proximity to Alaska and then to the rest of the Western hemisphere influenced, through their interactions, indigenous peoples in the Americas. Many years later their descendents were forced to adhere to new belief systems brought by waves of interlopers. These outsiders may very well have as ancestors such as mine that practiced the concept of a shaman.

Alaskan Natives respect and reverence of animals and the environment was also practiced by Native Americans in the continental United States. The traits of animals that humans do not possess were admired. Many native societies in the US had clan animals as identifiers and symbols of extended families. It is easy to understand how the admiration and abilities of animals they shared their environment with would be integrated in both Alaskan and American Indian Native lives. Who wouldn't want to be able to fly like a hawk or perhaps be as beautiful as a great blue heron? Although this was discouraged by religious outsiders, remnants of these traditions can be seen often in modern times. It is a shameful fact that our country did not pass

the *American Indian Religious Freedom Act* until 1978. Until coming back to graduate school late in life I was ignorant of this fact.

Interference in the education of indigenous peoples was also perpetuated. In the Wellbriety movement of the White Bison Native American organization, acknowledgement of the harm caused by boarding schools and forced government educational systems is seen as a root cause of generational problems. Wellbriety journey sought to visit many sites of these prior schools to focus on forgiveness and healing. (<http://www.whitebison.org/wellbriety-movement/wellbriety-mvmt-teachings.htm>) Many of those that spoke at the Thomas Indian School in Gowanda, New York, where I was in attendance, recalled the degradation and force used to insure compliance.

In the Yup'ik village I visited, I had the opportunity to talk to a brother and his younger sister affected by outside interference. The sister was born in a tuberculosis sanitarium where her mother was being kept. I had heard of TB in my youth, but never realized the devastation it did and still causes in rural Alaska. These enduring effects and social stigma place Alaska with the 2nd highest rate of TB in the nation in 2016, behind only Hawaii. In most previous years, Alaska has led the nation. His sister shared that the sanitarium was the only home she knew as a young child and thought of it for a time as her true home.

When she was older both her older brother and she were sent to a boarding school in the lower 48. I had heard of the Chemawa Indian School in Oregon due to that being the start of the Wellbriety's Journey of Forgiveness. And here sharing with me were two Alaskan Natives that were forced from their homes to attend it each year. Their experience was different that my

close friend that was forced to attend an Indian boarding school. They were able to go home to Alaska each summer, and were always so excited to be doing so.

They told me about one year when the brother had a friend that was in the boarding school for the first time and was so excited that they were going home for the summer. This young boy could not believe it. He kept asking if this was true, was this true? The brother and sister each kept trying to assure him that they were able to go home each summer for sure. A day before they were to board buses to begin the trek home this little fellow's heart gave out. He never got to go home. The brother and sister never forgot him, and you could tell the sister still held great bitterness regarding the past.

The brother was kind to spend additional time with me. He told me how they sent him to community college/trade school to learn to be an electrician. When he was able, all he wanted to do was come back home. It was a beautiful serene village community that has unfortunately more than their share of problems due to negative experiences with the outside world. He talked how their way of life was called subsistence living, and he knew that this meant they were less than in the eyes of those who gave them that designation. I said that I would be happy to fish the Kuskokwim River for salmon instead of buying it at the store. He told me how other Alaskan Native Corporations resisted outside interference with their way of life, and were punished by the withholding of government assistance for their villages.

Reintroduction of native languages is a recent educational movement. Many mature indigenous peoples were the product of forced assimilation and were not taught their original language. It is fortunate for some native nations that some elders survived with this knowledge intact for future generations. Someone in their village asked me to review her paper that she was

submitting for an online course. She said that her instructor had been very hard on her papers, so she wanted an outsider to please review it before submitting. I asked what the course was about; she said it was about the Yup'ik culture and language. I then asked if the instructor was Yup'ik. You guessed it, he was not. Her paper was good, I reassured her, and then added, remember someone like you that is Yup'ik, is the expert, and not him, in my eyes. She truly looked astonished and happy at my appraisal. To this day it is really how I feel.

The disintegration of the educational experience for Native peoples has as its roots' prior generations' negative experiences. It is understandable that college participation rates are lower for Indigenous peoples than for those of any other ethnicity. There is security in being among those that share your history, culture, and traditions. To venture into a world that has perpetuated so much harm to your community for multiple generations is not one that is entered easily.



horse sculpture near side of road

Lacrosse, identity, and representations

One of the many interesting things that have been reinforced for me coming back to graduate school as a non-traditional student is that representations of identity are important to those not seen as the majority in our country. I have marveled in the past regarding images and actors seen on the screen from British television and movies. There I saw different body types, ethnicities, faiths, sexual orientations, and socio-economic groups. This is just as an outsider looking in. I am aware within their own industries criticism of those getting acting opportunities and stories being told.

When I first started visiting the senior center where the elder Indigenous women did their craft work, I was inundated with sounds from the radio, television, and personal interaction; very reminiscent of my times with my father's parents. They had trouble hearing but everything was going on at the same time!

I started to notice that they often played a movie I really liked, *Last of the Mohicans*. I asked about it and was told that they had to purchase the video tape since it showed the *Creator's Game*. My friend explained that the Haudenosaunee (Iroquoian) people had developed the game lacrosse that contained a spiritual component—being played for our Creator. I had a nephew that played lacrosse and honestly saw it, until then, as only a sport played by the affluent. I never knew of any schools where I grew up as playing the game.

My friend went on to explain that there was a short scene of early lacrosse in the movie, *Last of the Mohicans*, and it meant a lot to the seniors to see this nod to Indigenous peoples of the Americas given in this movie. She said there is so few positive representations of Native peoples in the media, which they all relished and enjoyed this moment in cinema.

As a person of mixed heritage I often noticed that many representations of my heritage or those of other marginalized groups were used in cinema and media for sources of scorn, comedy, villainy, and to frighten others. I used to say to my mother didn't Native peoples *ever* win a battle or conflict? Germans were always evil Nazis, and Russians and Serbs still make great villains for movies and televisions. It can be difficult to only see this side to your ancestors and to know that is all that everyone else sees.

When I first came back to grad school as an older student the world language department was looking for conversation partners for international students learning English. I applied and said I was open to meeting and talking to anyone. I was paired with a male student from Saudi Arabia. I knew that traditionally education was gender segregated in their country, and was sure to dress conservatively when we met. I am sure that being older was of assistance in these interactions, as he told me of being taught from an early age regarding respect for elders and the mature women in his family, like his mother. I think these small attempts at outreach served me well as a graduate teaching assistant, on to being an adjunct instructor, to now being an advisor who interacts often with international students. Many of these students are from the Middle East with a large contingency being Saudi.

When I first started teaching as a graduate teaching assistant, I met many international students of Islamic faith. One such student would talk to me after class about his faith in light of what was being covered in gender and women's studies. He told me how he was brought up regarding sexual orientation and same sex relationships, though he respected what was being taught and would never want to hurt a fellow student by saying that in class. He sensitively relayed that he wanted to honor their lived lives, not bring divisive discourse to our discussions. He was letting me know why he would be silent at times when discussion was encouraged in

class on certain topics. He was glad that I encouraged students to join in where and when comfortable. My student said as a person from the Middle East he was sensitive to the stereotypes portrayed in the media, and did not want students first interactions with someone from his part of the world and from his faith to be negative.

In another class I taught we were covering women's suffrage. Part of the chuckle for me was asking them to define the word suffrage, and then discussing women's right to vote. A student from Kuwait proudly added to the discussion that with the crown prince's endorsement their parliament has voted for women's right to vote in 2005. Well that led to a lot of snickers within the room. I asked why. A few students volunteered how odd that was. I added why is it odd that those in power had to decide to share their power with the women in their country? How long had it been since women in our country had the right to vote; who decide this? Yes it was the men in the country finally in 1920, so it hasn't even been 100 years for women in our country, and then I told them that *all* women were not given that right at that time. In fact Native people of our country were not even given citizenship until the 1920's, and they did not have freedom of religion until Nixon, of all people.

The elder Indigenous women taught me a coda to the above discussion about voting in that they were not given the right to vote until 1964! I was incredulous. How naïve and ignorant I was to think that all citizens of our country had this right without differentiating because of ethnicity. A dear friend, who has since passed at age 86, had a sign in her lawn to celebrate fifty years of the right to vote. She was celebrating this, and honestly inside I was thinking how slow progress in our country for *all* peoples has been.

I wanted to add to this story about a time a fellow grad student invited me to her home to stop by one Friday evening. We used to talk before and after class. She was from the Middle East and was of the Muslim faith. We would talk about mundane things and also about how the Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Islam, and Christianity had a common beginning. Though she dressed conservatively for class, she was quite stylish at home. Her husband was out for the evening as the men would get together, so it was just us and her children. Believe me we had a sumptuous spread in the living room which made my small gift (which I researched before bring) seem tiny in comparison. It really was, without exaggerating, quite the feast. I was humbled and honored that she went to such trouble.

As eating was winding down, she asked if I wouldn't mind if she put the television on for the children as their favorite program was on. What a surprise to see that it was the syndicated repeats of the *George Lopez* series from the ought's. She said she was happy for them to watch a show with people that looked like them—brown skin and dark hair. She felt it was important to have positive representations from people that looked similar to them for her children to feel good about themselves. This was an eye opener for me. I would never think that a show like his would be meaningful for people from another country outside of the Americas.

This was a lesson that has stayed with me. People are looking for positive representations of their ancestry, their ethnicity, their faith, and so on. It is one thing to go to cultural competency trainings and another to see how important it is for all people to have their identities placed in an affirmative and constructive manner in our society. This is something for me to remember as I interact with current students, incoming students, their family and friends, as well as colleagues, staff, administration, and faculty.

Dance Fans Story

Little did I know when I registered for a Native North American Visual Culture class at WVU that I would actually have the opportunity to view Native art and visual culture in its depth and diversity firsthand? We had to select and inform our professor of our focal point--I chose Native horse masks.

Mid-semester the class took a field trip to the Cleveland Museum of Art to view the *Art of the American Indians: the Thaw Collection*. While there we were to focus on one item to study and make notes on to present to the class the following week. Though pleased with my presentation, our instructor was surprised I did not present on one of the two horse masks that were on display. There were Yup'ik (Native Alaskan) women's dance fans on display that captured my fancy as well as my imagination. One side of each of the Thaw finger masks depicts a smiling male face and the other the frowning face of a woman. I found the dichotomy intriguing as the down-turned mouths were associated with seals. The notion that they were created in reference to certain seals never crossed my mind. I surmised that this exhibited social commentary: masks created in such a manner as to display male dominance. Later I would learn in a Yup'ik Alaskan bush village that actually the downturned female mouth was patterned after the tastiest seal they hunted. The downward-mouthed mask was seen portraying a compliment by the women of this village.

In my visual culture class we viewed the documentary *The Drums of Winter* (*Uksuum Cauyai*) in class to explore the traditional dance, music and spiritual world of the Yup'ik people in a remote village. (Documentary Educational Resources, 1988, retrieved from <http://www.der.org/films/drums-of-winter.html>.) This film was very powerful to me and touched my heart. I was especially moved by one participant stating on camera how, *before the government took care of them*, they used to look out for each other and share with those in need. “Nothing that has been written about Yup'ik dancing comes close to the power of the Yup'ik commentary contained in *The Drums of Winter*.” (Ibid) It was hard to just sit there in listen as someone read from historical records conversations such as those in a small Yup'ik village with the priest of a new church attempting to be established in their community. The starving Yup'iks ask why, since in their culture they share so all may have from whatever is available that the priests, who have stored supplies for the winter did not share with them—in their dire need. They were rebuffed and told that it should be each to their own ability, and that the church was setting an example on how one prepares properly for life under harsh circumstances. It is a wonder that they were ever able to make any converts.

I had the opportunity to participate in an immersion experience one summer in a Yup'ik Alaskan village. There are no hotels in these villages, so we paid to stay at the local school. Upon entering the school I noted the mission posted on the wall. The emphasis was on making the highest priority on learning to assist the students in becoming life-long learners. I smiled to myself since this is a common term, along with non-traditional, that is used for student like myself by the higher education establishment. While pursuing opportunities to talk to Yup'ik elders regarding cultural connections in customs, art, handiwork, and promotion of wellbeing, I met a woman working in the school's kitchen. The handiwork she enjoys is crafting earrings to resemble dance/finger fans. I was last student she had approached regarding her earrings; she seemed perplexed that there had been no interest thus far. Me, I couldn't pass up the opportunity to purchase these miniature representations of Yup'ik culture! To have, hold, and, on occasion, wear these was a thrill to me. I am someone that appreciates the tactile as well as the visual, and that I could have these tiny pieces of practical art quite simply thrilled me.

This talented woman did not understand the lack of appreciation of this example (dance fan earrings) of her culture by outsiders. Their traditional ways of knowing or relating to their community and the natural world are continually challenged. "People who have become accustomed to living without power tend to avoid the obligations that accompany it." (Schaeffer, P. 2010) This is especially difficult to accept when realizing where they originally came from and their attitudes toward the earth. Traditional Yup'iks of southwest Alaska believe in an ancient cosmos whose shifting boundaries depend on human attention to rules, especially for sharing food, providing gifts, and making up for what other lack. This was a wonderfully harmonious and balanced outlook based on the indigenous kinship concept. I am humbled as I think on this cultural faith tradition.

I had the opportunity to talk to a brother and sister from this Alaskan village about their boarding school experiences in Oregon as children. The brother was a highly respected member of this village community and would often lead prayers before events that we attended. He would say the prayers in both Yup'ik and English. His sister related that as sad as *all* of their situations were, it was especially harsh to be prejudged by the Native students from the lower 48, as they phrased it. Native Americans from the continental United States would tell the Alaskan students that they only belonged in the kitchen serving them!

We covered topics that included the establishment of individual village corporations. This was a novel concept that I had not been aware. It is interesting to learn that a village of 400 retains its own uniquely individual status. This was a novel concept to them since previously they did not have to nor did they ever consider land ownership or trust. They considered land and the rivers to belong to the Creator for everyone to use and respect. "This momentous shift in the management of Alaska's subsistence resources from individuals and communities to formal, governmental institutions far removed from rural Alaska [has caused]...frustration, anger, and resentment in Alaska Native communities." (Argetsinger & West, 2009, p.6.) Some villages balked at the idea while this village used some foresight by deeming much of the coastal land nearby for subsistence use. The brother I had an opportunity to speak with echoed a viewpoint articulated in the article that restrictions are incompatible with their own traditional cultural practices and worldview. They have within themselves knowledge, customs, and beliefs that can have a regulating impact on subsistence hunting without unwanted and unneeded outside interference.

I was sincerely honored to have had the opportunity to engage some of these members of their Yup'ik community. The generosity of their sharing was most gratefully acknowledged. The brother I spent time with was especially was open and frank in his discussions. I have so much information from his conversations. I have experienced access and openness from elder female Native Americans that I have met in the past. To have spent so much time with this respected male elder of their village humbled me. Many of the women of the village seemed more reluctant to speak to me, perhaps due to the fact that I was closer in age to them?

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Elementary School story

I walked to school from K-12. When I first went to elementary school, kindergarten was half days throughout the year—mornings the first half and afternoons the second. Where we lived was approximately four miles each way to school. Looking back I don't really know how I did it. When I was in the fourth grade we moved to another house approximately a mile from the school. This is the closest I would ever live to school. During this time, I actually used to walk home during our hour lunchtime; eat for twenty minutes; and then hustle back. You never dared be late since they locked the doors at 1pm. Looking back it makes me feel like I went to school during the Stone Age.

I enjoyed the learning experience and could never get enough of books. Thanks to my mom's tutelage I knew how to read at a very early age. There was a time that she ordered the *Cat in the Hat* book series for me. After the third book came in the mail, the service was stopped. Lack of money was a current throughout my life, and I came to view owning books as a precious privilege.

I took to school like, well, you know. This was my element, and I enjoyed the learning experience. When you excel at something it's easy to love it. It was hard to accept that I had no gift for art or music in my teacher's eyes. Those low grades in these areas along with my low grades in naps (yes, we had to put our heads down on our desks and nap) and gym were a source of consternation for me.

I've mentioned in other writings how I was singled out early for my intellect and those related tales. To critique my teachers, all female, is easy: kindergarten: she left a lot to be desired—she slapped me once across the face because I wasn't a good napper (I talked during it.)

My teacher for first grade was great; second grade, she was strict but encouraging; and my third grade teacher was wonderful. Our fourth grade teacher had a breakdown in class for which we were blamed. I think that some of us were from less than ideal backgrounds played into that guilt trip. My fifth grade teacher was the one I tangled with regarding the Siouxian peoples and Mount Rushmore. Loved my strict, though encouraging, sixth grade teacher. Remember doing a report on Canada where I made their new flag, the maple leaf, my cover. After I went on to junior high, she would ask my brother, who followed me in school by two years, to have me bring this report in as example for her subsequent classes. Even today I am quite complimented by this.

In the fifth grade we were tested for music aptitude, and the clarinet was recommended for me. This I knew was never going to happen. Buying an instrument plus taking lessons, I already knew what that answer was. When other girls were going to Brownies or Girl Scouts, I learned early that wasn't for me. When I asked regarding dance or baton lessons that others were taking, I was told that would not be happening. Sometimes I felt like my whole life was just window shopping because having something that you might want was always beyond reach.

Excellence at school opened other opportunities for me. By the sixth grade our school district was starting to have what would now be called gifted classes at a certain school in our district. Two of us from my school were chosen to attend once a week. I learned early that, while I always was competing with my expectations of myself, others saw me as competition. The other student had access to travel to and from this school each week. For me, I had to walk.

Though there was bus service in our town, it was a rare event that I had bus fare. The school was six miles away from my elementary school, and my mother didn't feel that this was

bus fare worthy. I really tried to do this walk twice a week, but it soon became overwhelming. I was still responsible for the school work that I was missing, which began to multiply. The other student didn't have this same dilemma; their ride took them and came back to return them promptly to school when our lessons were over. The student made a point to let me know that even if her family thought that I should be going to these classes, they would never drive me also as I had no money to reimburse them for gas. They were pleased when I finally gave up and quit going. I remember like it was yesterday the last time I went. I was exhausted and bored with the twelve mile round trip twice a week. I gave up...

There are numerous stories from that period of time that I could go into but will stop here. If I get an opportunity I would like to find a specific picture from that time to show what I looked like. I learned very early that there was great power in controlling my eating. Lots of related conflicts resulted, though I had so little control of everything else that the ability to not eat was empowering. I tested one story out on my spouse but they found it too abhorrent and painful, so I will only tangentially talk about this. With the perspective of age; with learning more about eating disorders; and with the assistance of an amazing therapist could I recognize mine. If it wasn't my life I would almost find it comical that I've gone from being thin for 3/4ths of my life to what I look like now. For me it was never about being thin; it was always about having some control in my life.

I see these new students during orientation this summer trying to exercise control over their future lives. Some are filled with anxiety over their every decision. I try to encourage them to be kind to themselves during their first quarter of college. They will have ample opportunity to take more classes. They are encouraged to take this occasion to set themselves up for success. A successful first quarter of school is the best foundation for their future accomplishments.

Junior High story

I had to wear glasses from a very early age. My parents did not understand where this came from? No one else wore glasses in our family, and every year I needed a new pair. Early on my dad used to encourage me to just try harder, that perhaps I could really see without my glasses. It took years for them to accept this reality for me. Corrective lens, plus medical issues that I had throughout my life, were a financial burden for them. My parents were conscientious regarding our dental care, so we always went to the dentist. Both of them came from families that wore dentures so they valued taking care of our teeth. I added this to the beginning of this story to show that they did spend on necessities, but extras were not in the budget.

Junior high was the longest distance I had to regularly walk to school in my K-12 years. It was an eight-mile round trip, and it made me look forward to high school which was a mere six-mile round trip! These were the little victories I had growing up.

Again, school came easily for me; loved to learn and study. It gave me a great sense of accomplishment and a positive self-image. Only when someone would remark about my glasses or my nose or my clothes was I brought back to reality.

I remember my son telling me when he was in school that grading was an arbitrary measurement of student success. This made me laugh as I recalled my own educational journey. Arbitrary perhaps, but if an 'a' = excellence, I wanted that 'a'. I told him to excel for himself, not for me or anyone else. To challenge yourself; to strive and learn was meaningful to me, and I hoped, would be meaningful for him.

It was during these junior high years that my father became more concerned about my academic interests and lack of outside interests. He was troubled by my devotion to my studies

and love of books. He wanted me to join our junior high band as a way of expanding my horizons. My father was told at his place of work that these bands needed students to play instruments that had been purchased by the school. These included the tuba, Sousaphone, and French horn.

Believe me I resisted for a whole year until it became so contentious that I finally acquiesced and approached the junior high band director. Out of the three options only the French horn was a manageable size. He would have me stay after school and put music in front of me. Though I could read the music in an elementary sense, I really was clueless regarding the instrument. I would have to get lessons which I knew would go over big at my house.

Well they agreed to the weekly lessons which were they own special kind of torture. My instructor was mean and condescending, and made no secret that he looked down on me. It was a soul-crushing ordeal, but I didn't want to let my dad down. After a few lessons, I asked my band director if I was coming along enough to join the band. When he said yes I was free from the lessons! My mother was happy to no longer have this extra expense, and I was happy that I wouldn't have to share the same space with my instructor any longer.

I want to add that though the French horn was the small of my options, it is a large instrument. We were graded on taking our instruments home each weekend to practice. Since it affected my grade, I used to schlep that with me every weekend, no matter the weather. It was a chore. Finally when I was in high school I had a compassionate teacher that felt pity on me. She said that she saw me walking one day with an umbrella and my books in one hand while carrying my French horn in the other. She volunteered to lock my French horn in her closet on Fridays for me to retrieve on Mondays when I didn't want to take it home. She said it would be our little

secret! This act of kindness was amazing to me. That she would have compassion, or pity, on me is something that I never forgot. You never know how an unexpected act of kindness can make a lasting impression.

I am fortunate to have received many of these moments in my life. I try to remember this as I work with various students as an advisor. It's been quite hot out west for awhile, and though I have snacks (granola bars, etc.) for students, one day I decided I would also bring bottles of water to the office. During finals week I had an exasperated student come in sweating and worried about the final he just took. I suggested he take a breath, fill out the form that he came to see me about while he had a snack and a bottle of water. You would have thought that I gave him so much by his appreciation.

This brings a memory to mind about teaching a gender and movies class one summer at WVU. It was a small class of ten students so as surprise on our last day, I gave them each a movie pass that I bought so they could attend a movie of their choice. They were flabbergasted. One student said it was the first time any teacher had ever given him anything his whole life! I smiled at his compliment. I mention this student in particular since I saw him during the fall semester. He always made a point of saying hello, and expressing continued astonishment. These happy occurrences are always so pleasant to remember. I am glad that these are sprinkled throughout my educational journey.

High School story

I grew up during very turbulent times in our nation's history which was reflected in the town I called my home. Since this is an autoethnography, and not an autobiography, I will be purposefully vague and leave out my town's name. Other than being noted in the positive column for athletic achievements in male sports and male athletes going on to have careers in professional sports, our town is mostly infamous. This is place of my education for K-12.

There are all types of education you acquire growing up. In the traditional sense I excelled in being on the academic track in our high school. Back then we were called 'brains' instead of 'nerds', but I never minded. By being a member of the band, I was surprised at the insults that accompanied that membership. Very eye opening.

I loved English, and my homeroom teacher (the lovely woman that would lock up my French horn for me on weekends) was my 10th grade instructor. She gave me a firm foundation for the rest of my high school classes. My main interest was in the sciences and I especially did well in chemistry. Chemistry was my love in high school. I think I had an innate aptitude for it. In my heart I am pleased that my son evidently had that same genetic talent and became a chemical engineer. It's odd that two things I was unable to do: have a career with chemistry and complete an MBA--he has achieved in his life without coaxing from me.

Playing the French horn meant that I would have to wear a band uniform for marches and parades. This did not appeal to me. There were other girls that I knew that were taking dance or baton lessons to be majorettes. My mother did not want to spend money on lessons, and was not happy about the prospect of paying for cute uniforms when the regular band outfit was free.

One girl two years older than me came from a private school (Sewickley Academy) to participate in our band just so she could play the French horn and become our head majorette. Wow did she make an impression on me.

She was immediately made first chair in our French horn section and head majorette—no questions asked. Her family was quite affluent and she had had years of lessons on both. Her sparkled uniforms caught my imagination. It's odd to think back that students made fun of her for being less than thin back then, and also for having uniforms that did not match our school colors. As well as she could play and twirl a baton was as nice as she was. It's funny to think back and remember her now. She was accomplished, confident, and *pleasant*—a rare combination to behold in our town.

I was unable to earn any money during my high school years since my parents did not believe in anyone under 21 watching children, so after school I would stop at our local library and tutor adults with literacy issues. It hurt my heart to see people having difficulty reading. Books opened a world to me that I never knew before, and in many ways, will never experience in my actual life. I continued doing literacy volunteer work until I was involved in other activities in high school that required after school practice. For me this work echoed my early experiences in elementary school tutoring my classmates at the behest of my teachers.

I will add as a side note that all through my years getting an education in this town, we would hear praises in our classes for the rich person that donated money to build our local library and many others. Now as a high schooler I learned where this woman who built this library got her money from, as well as learning about the other libraries in western Pennsylvania. It really bothered me at that time. I wasn't grateful. I kept thinking that if these industrialists would have

paid their workers better wages, and perhaps respected and treated them better, they could afford their own books and some of things that are kept shuttered away in museums, under glass. Please look but don't touch for you will never have things this fine; please just admire what we have acquired on the backs of the less advantaged. You may borrow our books for a small period of time; we know that you do not have the ability to own fine books such as these. Sad to look back and have these memories intrude.

So many stories come to mind, looking back. I should mention the absolute astonishment that many of my teachers had for my academic excellence. I follow two younger uncles in school. They were 15 and 5 years older than me, and not interested in school work. The uncle closest in age to me knew the exact amount of days you had to attend school in order to pass. I never even knew such a thing existed till he told me. I honestly only missed school when I was sick. In fact I had my sibling follow me by two years in school. Only when my mom came to live with me after my dad died did I learn how much my sibling skipped school and almost didn't graduate high school. As disappointing and frustrating as high school could be, I never skipped! It never even crossed my mind. It made me think how narrow-minded and lame I must have seemed to him. Even now working on my doctorate all he says is that education was always my thing.

There is so much here, but I'll just go into a few more stories. The first is about the National Honor Society. Well as a student with a high 'a' average and lots of activities, I couldn't wait to be inducted as a junior in high school. Everyone that I knew was getting their letters of acceptance but me. Finally I asked my dad if he was not telling me, to keep it a surprise. When he said no, I burst into tears. The one thing that I thought I earned, I did not get? I was crushed. I went to school the next day to the principal's office to ask if there might be a

mistake. Well, I was told, having one of the highest averages in our school was not enough to get me in as a junior. Teachers had to *vote* you in, and a majority did not vote for me. Not being too dramatic, but it was like a knife in the back to me. I was crestfallen, but more negativity was to follow.

The next day our guidance counselor called me to his office. This was a person I used to live next door to for a few years. You know—they owned their home, we rented. (Renting, moving during all these years—I could write forever about that, sadly.) He chastised me for my nerve to question my exclusion in NHS as a junior. He brought out my school records to show me what a small person I was. He said that my intelligence test scores rated me too high, so they had to make an adjustment. Someone like me could never score that high; it had to be an error. After the *so-called error* by him, the school was questioning how I could do so well in my classes. It was obvious that I was working beyond my ability. I was not NHS material. I can still remember his venom spewing toward me and the awful smell of his breath. I was shaken to my core.

As a senior I finally got a letter for induction to NHS. The student that got a ride to and from the gifted classes I dropped out of in elementary school inducted me. Boy that was a moment of mixed feelings.

A few years ago I showed my high school diploma to my spouse and son. I told them my NHS story, and how I had come to despise that little insignia on my diploma. My son (who was inducted as, you guessed it, a junior) told me that they had a stringent set of guidelines at his former high school to qualify. None of them included a personality contest or a majority vote by the teachers. Again, happy that my journey was not echoed in his experience.

The second tale is that I had no guidance when applying for college. My mother thought that I should look for a job at the local five and dime after high school. I was appalled. Didn't all my hard work and grades mean something? I wanted to go to college. I scored high on my SATs, and started writing for college material. It was expensive to apply, so I narrowed my choice to three, with one of them as my top choice—due to a special program I had hoped to be accepted into.

My father found out by asking people at work about government student loans which dismayed my mother. Since I would be a science major, they also had what was then called National Defense Student Loans. It took both types of loans to get me room, board, and tuition to college. Although I had a scholarship from the college that I eventually attended, it was small compared to overall costs. (I was disheartened to read that college tuition has increased 1,000 % since I went to school; wages have not increased proportionally.)

My top choice wrote me a rejection letter that stated that although, yes, I had the SAT scores and grade point average necessary to qualify for entry to their prestigious program, they must deny me admission. They went on to state that my grade point average was in question due to the school I came from. While this would be perfectly acceptable from a high quality high school, coming from *my* high school, it could not possibly compare. From their perspective an 'a' from my high school was not equivalent to an 'a' from a quality institution, and thus they *must* reject me.

Its weird looking back and bringing these memories and images forward. On the day I graduated from high school sooo many girls were crying. Me, I couldn't wait to get out, to be done with compulsory education and go on to college. Then I would be living the dream...

Japanese Garden story

So today as I was running (walking) during the 3rd of 6 first-year students' orientations, I glanced over at the Japanese garden that has a center space on our campus. This is the first day of the two-day segments of these orientations; they are long eleven hour days. However today I wasn't feeling that tired. I don't know if it was the respite from the hot weather we've been having—it was in the 70's today, sunny, and quite breezy; or my new shoes; or perhaps my feeling a bit more confident than I did at the end of June when this all started.

I stopped at the Japanese garden to take reflective photos and contemplate the continuation of my story writing. I love to sit here and bird watch surrounded by Asian statuary; a rock garden and pond; and various trees both those native to Washington and a selection of cherry trees donated by the Japanese Consulate General. Delightful to spend time in the midst of the melding of cultures for a gentle respite from the day. I had to take time to record this instant today though I mostly rely on memories versus pictures to hold precious moments dear.

In my garden here in the Pacific Northwest has sprouted helpful and friendly colleagues. These fellow advisors add a fragrance to the position that I have not often experienced. I am advisor to two very different colleges and their five to six programs/majors each. During orientation I was responsible to make a presentation, complete with PowerPoint for each. Now I was certainly at a loss on what to do when it was suggested that I contact a certain advisor for assistance. After a staff meeting, I mentioned something to my colleague, and they said to be sure to follow-up our contact for the information. Although I neglected to do so before taking a 10-day break to go back east, my colleague remembered before they went on their break the following week, and sent me their information. The sharing of their presentation made my two projects that much easier for the short period of time that I had to prepare them. My stress level

was high since I knew that both presentations had to be done at the same time of day though in different rooms. This meant that someone else would handle the small of the two groups and be relying on my PowerPoint and handouts. That my coworker shared with me lightened my load. When I expressed my gratitude and appreciation, they simply said that we were in this together!

This spirit of sharing and cooperation is modeled by my fellow advisors quite often. I don't think I would be even at the point that I am now with my position without their outreach and assistance. How can you grow and thrive without sunshine and water? How can someone new learn their position without reliance on others initially? The shade provided by the taller trees that have been there longer with an established root system helps new vegetation grow. Without a firm grounding I could not be able to have the freedom to learn, make mistakes, and gain experience.

This advising position, being many miles from family and home, has given me a unique perspective when interacting with new students. When they ask what my impressions of the university are, I am positive as well as forthright, with a touch of diplomacy. I want to promote their academic growth while encouraging them as individuals. I see in our campus a real effort at inclusivity and cooperation. The small student to faculty ratio surely is of help to students as they navigate their personal journey in higher education. The staff and faculty tend to the new *crop* of newcomers whether they are first-time, transfer, or non-traditional students. They are the gardeners responsible for this latest *planting*; for these new arrivals. They approach it as a whole in a conscientious manner—from the viewpoint of an observer who has spent but a short time in their midst.

The Japanese garden brings back memories of my time as an undergrad with one of my two majors being biology. Only toward the last two years working on my degree were courses becoming available on ecology and environmental science. Though there was little to none in the way of guidance regarding what you could do with this track, in these types of courses I flourished.

There was nothing I enjoyed more than to be in hip-high wading boots conducting an ecological study of a pond in the middle of a forest. I was delighted to have the opportunity to do tree identification and bird counting in assigned wooded acreage. Now I was someone who walked to and from school every year for miles during my K-12 years. But never before did I see and understand tree diversity as I was able to now. It also was the first time I ever heard a woodpecker! To see this wonder in my binoculars exceed the pileated woodpeckers' cartoon representation. All these years later I still remember the first rush of recognition and respect for that actual bird in my sight.

I have a lot to learn to feel proficient in my current position. I want very much to have the experience and expertise to assist my students with the variety of questions and issues they have. I was complimented by a parent today that said they marveled that I had command of the various majors within the engineering programs' offerings. They said they felt like they were watching a doctor juggling many issues and diagnoses all at the same time. I was thankful that I appeared that way to this parent, and appreciated their encouraging words. By accepting this position I have the prospect to grow something that is uniquely mine that I desired for many years. In a still small way I have the opportunity to, at last, have my own garden; to grow as *I* wish during these later years of my life.

College story

The first thing I remember as we drove to take me to college for the first time that August was that *no one* would ever tell me what to eat again. That didn't happen (numerous have made comments or heavily exerted pressure), but it was my hope. Now people define it as an eating disorder. For the first 3/4ths of my life I basically ate very little, though today I have the opposite issue. My spouse hopes that my stories won't all be *sturm und drang*, though these events of turmoil and darkness are a thread throughout my life.

My undergraduate college was a small faith-based private institution of higher learning that my father wanted me to apply to. It was within a few hours driving distance from home. I resisted since it wasn't all that much larger than my school district (which was large.) It gave me a decent scholarship; better than my second choice, so I ended up there. My roommate was a Mennonite, so she had never heard of my branch of Christianity and I had never heard of hers. We used to laugh that they put us together since the school didn't know what to do with us.

Only with the perspective of time do I realize that my roommate fared better than me since hers was a Protestant-based faith. I had never heard of the type of Protestants that founded and ran our school, and learned very quickly of their conservative ways. This led to points of contention throughout my college years, though unlike my spouse, I think that these experiences made me the person that I am today. I am person that tried for eighteen months to find a full-time situation as an academic advisor, and then when offered such a position, traveled to the other side of the county to accept. This person is able to be away from loved ones and dear friends because of my life experiences. This is not ideal, but it is *my* life.

For reasons I won't detail here I became a biology major, and then later, added psychology as another major. I loved the environmental aspects of biology, but did not know, and was given no advising or guidance to possible career options in those fields. I loved being around all the flora and fauna. Trees, birds, bats, snakes—they all fascinated me. One thing that delights me today is being able to see so much variety in the Pacific Northwest where many enjoy the experiences of the outdoors.

Our school was the semester system, so by the second semester of my first year, I was employed for twenty hours a week in the college cafeteria. I also worked at home at our local mall (by walking three miles to catch a bus) during winter breaks and summers full-time. It was not until I was much older that I realized that many students did not have to work while they went to college. Talk about being clueless. I had friends and relatives that had tuition, car and condo paid for while they went to school. One of them only got their first job upon passing the bar. An uncle remarked to me wouldn't I have like to have had such a life. Really, even the concept was foreign to me. It would be like wishing, knowing that they seldom come true.

I originally wanted to go to graduate school but did not know how I could afford it. There was no advising at that time telling me that I could have gotten student loans to help with that. Even if I had known, despite the fact that I was an excellent student, I met great resistance from my psychology professors regarding grad school. Though I had the desire, none would give me guidance, with one professor telling me that since I did not have plans to marry soon, they could not recommend me. I was incredulous! He said that without knowledge of the marital bed I could not relate to those in need of help. Yea, he really said that.

Looking back I can see the continuation of my concerns regarding issues of gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, accessibility, and so on. I witnessed many incidents of unfairness and hurt not only with myself, but with others. The hurt of others sometimes affected me more because of witnessing the hurt on my younger sibling on our life growing up. When something was done to me, I often absorbed peoples' excuses/reasons for doing what they did; I still struggle with this. But when it happened to my sibling or others, there was no reasonable justification for their actions.

I was seen as an *other* by many students. I came from a town with a reputation, so they drew conclusions from that. My faith and ethnicity was strange and unfamiliar to many. I experienced what would now be called exoticization. My differences were seen by some to be exciting and desirable; others saw them as points of derision and scorn. I marvel still today when people I don't know well or at all make a point to tell me exactly what they think of me without provocation. Do they think so little of me, that I have so little value in their eyes, that their estimation or evaluation of me is justified?

My experiences from K-12, and now college, have developed and encouraged empathy in me. This serves me well in advising others throughout their college experiences. Understanding is an excellent foundation for a mutually respectful advising experience. An advising space should be one where a student's frame of reference is acknowledged and valued. My experiences have also led me to approach students from an egalitarian perspective. At my core I do believe we are all equal in our Creator's eyes and deserve equitable opportunities, rights, and treatment by others. Although I am definitely immersed in doing thing for myself—my career, finishing my education—I have not lost sight of those I came to serve and assist. I wanted an

opportunity to use my talents, expertise, and intellect in higher education, and my life's journey has brought me to this point.

Would I be as willing to reach out to other students if I had not experienced such adversity in my life? When students, staff, parents, and faculty talk to me, would I have been an interested and alert listener had I not experienced my own trials and rejections? There is a scripture that talks about tribulations producing endurance and perseverance. These in turn can encourage and develop a faith, not only in a greater spiritual sense, but also in you and others. In those I now encounter in my current position, I see courage, hope, and faith in what lies ahead. And I hope to be there to support it. Not in some negligible way, but I hope in a tangible way.

There was a poster I used to love that was from a website called *despair*. It was a rift on those feel-good positive posters you could find in business offices. I loved the one called *mistakes*: “it could be that the purpose of your life is only to serve as a warning to others.” It showed a ship like the Titanic sinking. That’s my sense of humor, and I used to think it hit pretty close to home. Now I like to think of my life in the words of Beatrice Wood, artist: “my life is full of mistakes. They’re like pebbles that make a good road.” And that road has led me to this research and to academic advising. Not a bad road after all.



Me in 1988

Master's Degree story

I had the desire to complete a Master's degree but didn't know if I would ever have the ability, resources, or time. With the whole *Mom's Turn to Learn* thing it spurred me on. I applied and had to take undergrad coursework after first before I was permitted to apply to their program. I will continue in my efforts to accentuate the positive as I come to the last two stories dealing with my direct educational journey through graduate school. I will leave most of the turmoil and dark places in the margins; unseen and unspoken.

When I finally did get accepted into the program, I was excited to begin. I started on a path that concentrated on education, gender, age, and cultural components. These were the issues that I wanted to pursue and research.

With each new class, I was delighted to meet and engage with a community of learners. Most of those wanting to pursue a degree were younger than me. A common goal was a focal point with which we came together. Often students that were in my age group appeared disinterested in engaging with me, perhaps due to diverging educational outcomes or lack of a common path that brought us to class at that time.

I took a qualitative methods class with a dynamic instructor. For my research I wanted to connect with elder women doing craftwork. My mother's art was doing for her family and others. Since she enjoyed sewing I thought that working with women doing some type of handiwork would be an excellent start. Through my professor I learned that these women's craftwork, be it quilts, beadwork, baskets, and so on were actually considered documents. That concept still blows my mind. It made what I wanted to do even more exciting to me.

I was fortunate, as I have written about before, to find a group of elder Indigenous women who were willing to have me visit. That first semester I drove up so often, even if it was just for the morning. I only had a night class on Mondays, and my instructor understood that I was driving back from a distance each day. To plan a visit for a Monday morning I used to drive up on a Sunday evening, and sleep at a nearby rest stop till daybreak. I don't know if I would have the energy to do that today, but enthusiasm and desire gave me the vigor to continue.

When the spring semester came around I had to wait for the weather to get warmer for safe driving road conditions. The first time I visited in the spring, and everyone said they missed seeing me, I was complimented. Part of me, deep inside, could not believe how fortunate I was to have made friendships out of this exploration. These enduring relationships have meant the world to me. I never could have imagined this could be a byproduct of my meager research efforts. It is a blessing to have these vibrant and forceful women in my life!

In a pattern similar to my undergraduate degree, except for my first semester, I worked while pursuing my master's degree. I was fortunate to obtain a graduate teaching assistantship in women's and gender studies during this time, working twenty hours a week. It allowed me to interact with undergrads and develop a desire to continue with this type of work. I knew that I wanted to work in higher education with students in some capacity.

I could relate to non-traditional, non-majority students the most since this had been my experience. Some students could see that in me or would come to understand that part of me as an instructor. I was always a bit surprised when some would make assumptions about me that relatives and students had made about me in the past. It's amusing that time may pass but some things don't change.

I loved taking graduate classes. I still enjoy the whole experience of learning to this day. It truly does open a world of unseen possibilities. Each class had individual challenges and new concepts to absorb. I treasured each book I would acquire and was thrilled that graduate education was more about thinking about concepts, theories, ideas, than about testing.

It appeared that there were changes in educational approaches since my first foray into higher education. It was now not necessarily top-down, instructor-centered learning. I grew up during a time where many teachers taught to the test or wanted students to parrot what they said back to them at testing time. Graduate school was quite a different approach, and I liked it.

Learning was more student-centered than teacher-centered. This was not an absolute, but appeared to be embraced by most of my professors. They actually wanted to hear what students had to say; how they were applying the concepts we were learning. I loved the interchange of ideas and growth in myself and my classmates throughout each semester. It was lively, active, and a source of continuing exploration; what a delight.

By working as a graduate teaching instructor for women's and gender studies, we had a lot of flexibility in our approaches to the course content. We used a required text, and then there was a supplemental text with a science emphasis. Since I had a Bachelor's of Science in biology and psychology, I integrated this into our curriculum. After a semester or two, I learned that I was the only one of the GTAs using it. It was a valuable resource to me, and served as a catalyst for challenging the students.

Since I was doing research with Indigenous women, I also integrated into our syllabus information about Indigenous women's influence on early feminists in the United States. I was fortunate to be able to educate our students on the valuable contributions made in the past, and

that continue being made. Since there is now in higher education an emphasis on social justice, issues of importance to Indigenous peoples would come up into our discussions of those marginalized and disenfranchised in our society. With gender studies I was able to include information on two-spirit peoples that were embraced by many Native tribal nations. I witnessed many animated discussions throughout this time.

I feel fortunate that I was able to come back to college later in life to complete my master's degree as a non-traditional, lifetime learner student. To acquire this education was a personal dream and goal of mine. Though unspoken for many years, I held this desire to go back to school. It is surreal that I was able to achieve this degree, and to be hopefully in the final stages of my dissertation research on the way to my doctorate. My wish has turned a dream into reality; the ashes of my life into something more than I could have hoped for.

Doctoral Degree story

What could be more intimidating for me than writing this story right now? I'm writing late at night and can hear a train in the distance. I literally grew up right next to railroad tracks, so that sound takes me back to my beginnings—good for writing about memories. Also tonight I took pictures of my dimly lit room with me at my computer and desk. The bed I use now is the same size as the one I had in college--extra long twin, a circle back from my undergrad days. Never thought I'd been spending time in a dorm-size place again.

I began taking doctoral-level courses while completing my master's. The first class I had was with a professor that talked about *memes*; never heard of the word before, let alone the concept. I was totally intimidated, and started thinking I was outside my element. Looking back I am glad I persevered, but this class loomed large in my memory. I don't think I ever thought that I would take a class at a doctoral level, and was downcast at my prospects to succeed. This was a large hurdle in the beginning of these studies. Naturally I got my desired 'a', but I was riddled with doubt throughout.

While taking course work, I continued my graduate teaching assistantship with Women's and Gender Studies. When I timed out of that, along with some of my colleagues that were pursuing doctorates also, it was time to look for another position. There was one GTA that I desired and got as far as a finalist, though not selected. I was then offered a position as a student success coach, University 101 instructor, and live/learning specialist wrapped into one graduate assistantship which I gladly took. It had so many different aspects to the job that I knew it would be a challenge. One week after I accepted this, I was called and told that the position I had previously desired now had an opening. I had already accepted my new GA, so I turned it down. I think it turned out for the best since my two years' experience in this new GA position gave me

the background and experience necessary to be seriously considered, I hoped, for an academic advisor position. As it turned out, a few years after this, it did contribute valuable experience to my curriculum vitae.

After this graduate assistant position was no longer available (the university closed the residence hall where it was located), I began attending school part-time. Thanks in part to my former supervisor I was able to work part-time as a lecturer/instructor for my former department. I am grateful for the opportunity, experience, and compensation that came with it.

For one of my doctoral classes we had to consider our own educational philosophy; with what theory were we aligned. Just as in feminist studies where we looked at feminist theory to define ourselves, I now again had an interesting dilemma. Though my son is a chemical engineering he loves discussing theory, so I gave him a call. As I examined the many theories, I was perplexed to consider that I aligned with Marxist theory. He explained why that should not be a concern while explaining that he considered me someone that aligned with egalitarianism. This suited me fine, and I continued to use this as an instructor. I do believe that all humans have worth and should be treated with equity, and my education in gender studies supports my perspective in this life.

While taking doctoral courses, I attended with many of the same students. It was interesting to watch as each was in different stages of the program, and were completing their studies at different rates. The comradery was greatly enhanced the learning experience. You had people to go to that were experiencing similar issues and problems. A few students that were already done with classes I had yet to take brought me in their books to use. This was

unexpected generosity that I remember as I write today. Some students that took a class before me would give me tips on what to expect from a certain instructor.

All of these social interactions added to a positive atmosphere for my studies. It was meaningful to be part of a cohort while taking classes. This is something that I try to remember to say to the students that I advise today. When they enter a specific major, their classmates make up a cohort that hopefully will journey together toward graduation. They might share insights, required materials, and outlooks to encourage academic success.

I know this was an important component to my doctoral studies for me. One of my friends said they understood this. They had gone to night school to pursue an associate's degree, and one facet they enjoyed was the academic and social interaction of their classmates. My friend said she missed it upon conclusion of her studies. It was a fond memory that she still embraced. I must add that the academic and social aspect of my doctoral studies is only surpassed by my undergrad experience. It is fortunate that I was able to participate in a similar situation as a non-traditional student; something for which I am most grateful.



Me in 1990

ETSC Story

There are two different departments that are assigned to me as an academic advisor. The first department is Engineering Technologies, Safety, and Construction (ETSC). When I applied for my current position there were three openings at our school, each for differing departments. For this position, they were looking for someone to work closely with the engineer school programs. Although there is another department I am responsible for, and will talk about in another story, the ETSC department would entail the majority of my time and efforts.

I lobbied for my current position for a few reasons. I have an undergraduate degree with a double major, one being Biology. I had a strong science background. I have my master's degree and am currently pursuing a doctorate in education. I am serious about academics and want a career in higher learning. I integrated my science and Indigenous studies background into my teaching curriculum as an instructor. And last but not least, my partner is an engineer, and more importantly for their program, I raised a person that became an engineer. It might sound ludicrous to some, but I have seen firsthand as a parent many of the challenges these students face. I also know tangentially some of the talents necessary to succeed in such programs.

As I've mentioned before, I have had a few people come up to me here on campus stating that they were not interested in the challenges that my two departments bring. Others say that they heard my spouse and my offspring are engineers, so that must help. I have to smile at both. Yes, the position is challenging, and there are times I worry I will not be able to learn everything necessary to competently serve my students and their departments. And yes, they are both engineers, and if I had to mention my family connections to engineers to get considered for this position, I was going to do it!

In the final analysis, I am happy to be selected and serving in this stimulating job. I was told later by my supervisor that my great desire to be considered for this position was the deciding factor. I elucidated my qualifications, my enthusiasm, and any related information to be seriously considered for this position. It was a day of elation for me when I was selected.

To review the types of academic advising we employ, it is an amalgam of developmental and prescriptive advising. Prescriptive advising is more linear, leading students to what is required for each program. The student must follow directions to be successful in their major. Developmental advising stresses interaction amongst the student and higher education as a whole. An interesting example was obtained from NACADA (the National Academic Advising Association): Prescriptive advising tends to be the "do it for them" model. Developmental advising is the "help them do it for themselves" model.

Especially for the ETSC department, I identify competencies in technical and quantitative subjects that are required to successfully matriculate into their majors. I monitor involvement with regard to completion of prerequisites and achievement of the required grade point average to be successful in their respective degree program and academic major.

I also plan and implement a university introductory course exclusively for the students in ETSC. It takes place in our fall quarter and in the main building where they will take most of the courses for their major. By being in my section, they will get to know the details and background necessary to succeed in their respective majors as well as learning to interact with me as their academic advisor.

The ETSC department offers Bachelor of Science degree programs in Industrial Engineering Technology; Mechanical Engineering Technology; Electrical Engineering

Technology; Technology Education; Safety & Health Management; and Construction Management. The ETSC department provides an education that has a high rate of employment opportunities with founded in math, science, and the liberal arts. The programs work with advisory committees to stay current and meet accreditation guidelines.

Industrial Engineering Technologies, per our catalog, prepares students for leadership positions in industry and technical distribution. The program applies algebra, trigonometry, and the physical sciences to industrial systems. This is one of the major that I know the least about at this time, though I am responsible for gathering facts and information for students interested in this program, as with all of their programs.

Mechanical Engineering Technology provides a degree to students seeking an education leading to a career as an engineering technologist in the mechanical or manufacturing fields. This is a program where I feel I have a degree of comfort with already.

When I describe comfort, I mean it in terms of having a rudimentary understanding of the program and its requirements in order to assist students. I am privileged to have arrived at this level of comfort with most of the ETSC programs at this time. I am fortunate to have access to a variety of faculty supporting these programs due to the location of my office. By the proximity of this office to faculty and students, I can better serve their programs. I am also lucky that faculty have been accessible and open to me as I learn the intricacies of their programs.

Electronics Engineering Technology strives to ensure that graduates have the competence, skill, and expertise to develop practical designs and modifications for the implementation, operation, and production of complex systems to meet the ongoing needs of

private and public industries. Again, as with most of these programs, I am borrowing their words to describe the varied majors.

Technology Education leads to a degree to teach exploratory Technology Education (STEM) at the junior or senior high level. With this emphasis, technology may be described as the diverse collection of processes and knowledge that people use to extend human abilities and to satisfy human needs and wants. Further, technological literacy is the ability to use, manage, assess, and understand technology. This specific major is the only one of its kind in the Pacific Northwest.

Safety and Health Management's mission, per their website, is to "prepare students to be excellent, industry-ready safety professionals who have the confidence and leadership capabilities to navigate the complex organizational and knowledge networks necessary to succeed in contemporary safety and health management." The program director took the time when I first started to carefully review and describe their program so that I might assist the students in their understanding of what is required. Honestly thanks to the time given to me to learn about this program, it was the one that I was most comfortable with at first. The Safety and Health Management major is the only one of its kind west of the Mississippi.

Lastly, Construction Management prepares students for management positions in the construction industry. Students have to be accepted into the major prior to taking upper-division courses. Students pursuing Construction Management are required to work with a faculty advisor also to ensure that prerequisites for entry into the major have been satisfied. Construction management students have the choice to concentrate on one of two different construction types; general building or heavy civil construction. This is common with many of the other ETSC

majors where they have different areas of emphasis where a student must choose which to follow.

It is a challenging to learn these varying programs while advising students. There are days when I feel that I am running alongside of them, playing catch-up with the knowledge it takes to help them succeed at our school. My desire is to learn as fast as I am able; to have the expertise to know or anticipate questions and answers for all involved. I am not *bored* with my position; far from it. In a separate story I will discuss the other department that is my responsibility for as academic advisor.



Safety engineer, T, with wildcat

Cross-cultural Advising story

How do I reach across cultures when advising? I think I start by referring back to lessons I taught as an instructor in women's and gender studies. I would put the word multi-cultural on the blackboard and go around the room for definitions. Cultural has many layers and means different things to people or groups of people. It is at these times I am thankful for cultural competency training I had in the past. My main take away from it was that we must always strive toward that goal, but we will never arrive at cultural competence.

Before I arrived at my current position, I joined the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) which is an educational association for those involved in advising in higher educational to aid in the educational progress of students. A few months after accepting my current job, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to attend a regional conference for this organization. It serves a professional development for advisors, as well as providing multiple resources as they advocate for effective academic advising.

NACADA has numerous resources on cultural advising, and they serve as an important research and discussion background to issues that may arise. Articles are on a wide range of topics including international students; advising students of color; multicultural advising; and other issues of multicultural concern. This would also include first generation college students and their specific needs.

I serve two specific programs at our school that encompass numerous majors. One of the programs, due to their majors, attracts many international students. This naturally was before national policy changes within our country. Some of the international students have that additional burden along with the other many challenges that being an international student

brings. I have seen the anxiety and fear on the faces of my students, or prospective students, as you try your best to reassure them with your limited abilities.

I titled this story cross cultural advising, but it basically is a forum to discuss two specific impressions I have made while working on my graduate studies that relate to what I bring into advising. The first happened when I was a graduate assistant: live/learn community specialist; instructor; and student success coach.

I attended unpaid training during the summer leading up to my employment that first August of my position. The training for me was quite illuminating. Not because of the content or subject matter being taught, but because of the manner in which some of the information was being taught, and the accompanying comments.

When you have little status and want the job for which you are training (me) you sit there quietly, but you are listening. Do they realize you are listening and retaining not only the subject material but also the way it is being taught?! The snide comments and sneers regarding the students were hard to stomach at times. I was incredulous. I'm nobody or nothing special, but I think students deserve our respect and professionalism. My impression was that some of these have lost their perspective on why they were there and who they were ultimately serving. I'm sure they felt it was their peers, supervisors, and administrators, but, to me, it is the students. Some of the comments resonate with me to this day.

I cautiously bring this up because of a discussion I had with a graduate student here a few weeks ago. I wish to tread carefully so not to out either the student or the situation they were in, but their experience echoed my own from years ago.

To digress I once had a counselor tell me that I was a type of ‘wounded healer’ since I had empathy with others. This comment came after I mentioned that my best friend had accompanied one day to visit the senior center where the Indigenous elder women did their craft work. My friend was surprised at how many came up to me to discuss what had been happening with them, their families, or the tribal nation since my last visit. Some of the stories were heart-wrenching and sad.

My friend commented on the way home that she marveled at my listening skills and calm demeanor. She said she could never hear such stories without reacting or being overly emotional. I told her that there were times when I drove back that I cried in my car, but I could not cry in front of these women. Through research and reading I learned that this is not my pain and I should guard myself from reacting as if it was. If they were sharing with me, I needed to show I cared and respected what they had to say. I wanted to honor their words and friendship while being acutely aware that as an outsider to many in their community I represented this outside world that brought them such pain.

So I was at an *event* where I was introduced to a graduate student. Circumstances later that day gave us an opportunity to talk and get acquainted more. The graduate student shared that they were given a chance to sit in on a meeting with a prestigious group related to the university. The graduate student felt privileged to have such an opportunity to be in their presence and observe them as they engaged in their meeting.

The student shared that suddenly they were disbelieving the direction the meeting took. (Please remember I am taking great pains to be purposefully obtuse.) These prestigious well-situated group members began to talk and laugh at research they had read. The research

discussed the strong relationship between the current generation of students and their parents.

The group began to make demeaning and disparaging comments about both the parents and the students.

The graduate student was shaken by this. As the offspring of immigrants they took pride in visiting and including their parents in their educational pursuits as a first generation college student. This student was happy to share their life and experiences with their parents and family. After attending that meeting the graduate student felt shame and great inadequacy that they would never succeed in higher education. The grad student was in tears as they told me of this incident.

I gently said that they should consider how *they* felt *before* this seminal meeting. Did they feel comfortable or coerced in their relationship with their family? If they were comfortable before, perhaps they should instead look at the group instead of themselves. Perhaps they were weighing the voice of this group due to the importance they gave them. Did this group deserve this? How did what was being said at the meeting make them feel *really*, and why? The graduate student was part of a culture that valued familial relationships; members of this group obviously did not. Welcome to another aspect of education in life.

There was a smile of understanding and a conversation of grateful appreciation of their family. Their approach to their family was the right one for *them*. It didn't matter any longer that this so-called esteemed group made students and their parents objects of derision. What mattered now was the admiration and high regard that they felt toward the relationship with their families. This is cultural understanding; understanding that came through initial pain to a new appreciation for what they valued in their life.

Orientations story

This summer consists of first year and transfer student orientations during an intensive five-week period. Later in the summer there will be a few more orientations for students delayed in arriving. The first year orientations are over a two-day period of time with the transfers only for one day each. I viewed these with trepidation since there was much to learn with responsibility to represent both of my programs to students and their families.

Transfer orientation was first up, and getting organized was a major adjustment. I had to prepare presentations for both—and both were at the same time, but in different buildings! That day I walked quickly between both buildings to be sure everything was setup. Someone was supposed to come to cover one of the programs, but I was responsible for the presentations and handouts; major stress that day.

Dealing with the students and their families is often the plus that comes with these new activities for me. There is interest, enthusiasm, and hope in abundance. Not being faculty, I cannot answer all of their questions, but strive to inform them as best as I can. They have my contact information and can contact me over the summer for a phone consultation if they desire. One student volunteered to drive back three hours for a meeting with me, and was happy when I declined and said we can meet over the phone instead as often as they might need.

My colleagues are a wonderful resource for preparing the background work needed for these events. Without their cooperation and helpfulness my job would be far more difficult. I am thankful for their professionalism and their expertise. Being new at this position is made far easier by the support of my supervisor and coworkers. I am sure anyone that comes to them for

advising has made a wise choice. They appear intelligent, proficient, and gracious when dealing with students. I'm sure many of them make quite the impression on their students.

I should take time to add that our department has superb support staff also. The office assistant and student interns are a knowledgeable and helpful resource. Our office assistant handles their position with aplomb. Their composure and assurance helped make my first weeks at the job so much better. They even were a resource to contact when moving out west. Support of the department's office assistant is reassuring and a superb source of answers to a multitude of questions from this novice.

The first year student orientations are two-day events. I make presentations on the first day in a room next to a magnificent elephant statue. It serves as a reminder that I must get to the work of prodding my memories in the evening for my research. My day is not done just because orientation may have concluded till tomorrow.

The presentation consists of an overview of the many majors within the two departments including contact information for faculty as well as English and math requirements. I also bring informational handouts for each major along with support materials on a variety of matter crucial to the student's preparation before registering for class.

These handouts and materials may seem incidental but are quite numerous and require a bit of strength to carry on my part. With the heat of the summer and walking to various buildings on campus during this time with a heavy load of papers my hip has started to give me issues. I don't know if it's because I'm anxious about my research or these orientations that I have started overeating again. I'm sure the added weight in the heat we've been having doesn't help. How does an emotional eater learn to reign in their emotions? I was able to be proactive

for many months but have begun falling back into old bad habits. I am being disciplined with my readings and writing. I need to exert discipline in my physical health somehow also.

Many parents, grandparents, and other family members have stopped and talked to me during various events of orientation. The first day of the two-day orientations is an eleven hour day for me, so there is ample opportunity for interaction. I have met supportive parents, interested siblings and friends, as well as grandparents that have the responsibility for the students. Families can come in all sorts of sizes but they appear united in their concern for their student welfare and success. I have to smile to myself when I hear my name being called out by a parent on the second day. They have gotten to know me almost (or sometimes better) than the student.

The second day the support staff goes to the computer labs to assist the incoming students with any questions or issues. Since I am new, by assisting students I have started to acquire an understanding of their scheduling system. At WVU it was easier getting acclimated from being a grad student to a GTA and then to an instructor. You learn the system initially as a student at the university. Here everything is new and at first strange. Although there are parallels each system is not without its own unique challenges.

I can write this story now with the perspective of an end in sight. Four of the five weeks have flown by quickly, and I am happy to feel that important learning has taken place by the student, and by me. I so want to be a resource that students and their departments can rely on. I feel almost like I did in my k-12 years. Challenging myself to strive and do better. I'm hoping that the required learning will take place to become competent and able to take on the next challenge—because there *always* is the next challenge.

F&CS story

I asked when I first started in my position as academic advisor if there was any relationship or reason for the departments of ETSC and Family & Consumer Sciences (F&CS) to be with one advisor. They said that they were related in a rudimentary sense since ETSC is seen as the evolution from high school shop classes and F&CS is seen as the progression from home economics.

There are a variety of students that are pursuing majors in ETSC and F&CS, though when I was in junior high and high school these classes were divided by gender. Fortunately no such division now exists. Back in the day we *had* to take these classes, and had no voice in the matter. I was thrilled when they were over with as cooking, sewing, family life lesson, and so on, held little interest for me.

The F&CS department consists of seven areas of emphasis for majors. As with ETSC, it has taken time to learn about each, and I am still a work in progress. I am less involved with these students when it comes to their major classes as they are directed by faculty advisors. My job is to help student navigate what are considered general education requirement courses. The first quarter of their freshman year consists of only these types of classes without any experience with possible major classes. Later with students' academic progress advancing they will met to discuss entrance to the individual programs with faculty.

I work individually with them to identifying courses in order to build a matriculation plan that may ensure timely admission to one of major programs in F&CS. While doing this, I also assist them, as need, with federal financial aid; appeals in compliance; and deadlines established by the Office of Financial Aid. This is for both of my programs. I also assist veteran students

with their unique requirements for school and the VA along with those in ROTC programs.

With F&CS students I assist in exploring alternative degree programs to minor in since many majors in this department do not require enough credits to graduate. One or two minors may be in the future to complement their F&CS majors.

The first major I will discuss is Global Wine Studies (GWS). Hard to believe, there are a large variety of orchards and *vineyards* in the state where I reside in the Pacific Northwest. Borrowing from their information, the degree is for anyone with an interest in pursuing a career in the wine industry. CWU encourages international students, veterans, and working professionals to apply as well as traditional students. The GWS degree prepares graduates for a variety of wine industry careers.

Until I met with the GWS faculty director I had never heard of a sommelier, and had to ask what that was. Later I asked my brother-in-law and sister-in-law if they knew the definition since they are into gourmet dining and have traveled overseas. Of course they knew! I have to add that the first meeting I had with the director was informative and quite stimulating.

They were inquired about my Indigenous research, and we agreed to disagree on the *Kennewick Man*. The Kennewick Man's remains were *finally* laid to rest when I first came out to the Pacific Northwest, and I was relieved that he was been buried by his genetic descendants. The program director felt that the remains should have stayed within the scientific community. I took it as a positive sign that things were made right for the Indigenous peoples that saw the Kennewick Man as one of their own, and desired to lay him to rest for eternity. Now his spirit has found peace as well as peace finally coming to the Native communities concerned with his wellbeing.

Students majoring in the Recreation, Tourism & Events Program receive a degree with an emphasis in either recreation management, tourism management or event management.

Rec management majors focus their studies on community based recreation or non-profits; outdoor resource recreation; or entrepreneurial ideas related to recreation. Each of these areas is based on the principles of sustainable practices that take into deliberation people, economics, communities and the environment. Tourism management majors may choose a career managing and directing programs; facilities; and people at resorts, convention centers, hotels, among others. I currently have a male student with a paid internship this summer at a new local hotel in our college town. Event planning is their newest specialization addressing the special event, convention, and festival industry.

There is a family and consumer sciences general major on which I know very little. The information both on the website and in the catalog is sparse. The major is a general introduction to the broad areas of family and consumer sciences and needs a minor or double major. I should add here that my institution differs from WVU regarding grading in that + & - attached to a letter grade are weighed differently than the plain letter grade. This is something I am still getting used to.

Their Family and Child Life Major places an emphasis on skills in interpersonal communication, oral presentation, leadership, problem solving, and conflict resolution. Students must choose to specialize in either Family Science or Child Life. I've had students perplex on which direction to follow though I reassure them that a decision on their eventual direction is not needed initially. They are however encouraged to apply for the major early in their academic careers to allow for proper planning and placement in the family and child life practicum. Students in the family science specialization are prepare for opportunities in family service

agencies, parent education programs, family counseling centers, and other family life education settings. The child life specialization applies child development theory to the practice of helping children and families through traumatic events, specifically related to hospitalization. It prepares students for opportunities that involve working with children, or to pursue a child life internship.

The building where this department is held is in the building directly across from the ETSC home. When I walk out outside during a break I can hear the voices and laughter of children in an outdoor brick-walled portion of their structure. It's delightful to see the little ones coming back and forth to what must be a special program related to child life and/or a daycare. I've never pursued it to ask, though I have peaked over the wall to ask for campus directions. There is still a lot for me to learn with the university, the physical campus, and surrounding communities.

There is also a Family and Consumer Sciences Career and Technical Education Major that satisfies the endorsement for family and consumer sciences teaching for career and technical education. In addition, within this department there is Business and Marketing Education Major that satisfies the endorsement for business and marketing education teaching for career and technical education. Both of these majors as well as the Tech Ed major in ETSC require the student to work in conjunction with the education department on campus. Because of this, students need to have a 3.0 for this major with NO room for exceptions. The education department has this grade point average as a hard and fast rule as required by the Department of Education for our state. This grade requirement has been challenging at times for some of my students. There is no margin of error in these majors.

Lastly there is the ATM program: Apparel, Textiles, and Merchandising. Students may acquire knowledge in the business aspects of the fashion industry with courses are focused on

fashion industry context. Students will apply their understanding and comprehension of the program to professional level projects and industry case studies and graduate with a comprehensive portfolio. I have meet parents that have brought their students from great distances to be a part of this program.

Writing about my two departments was problematic in that I wanted to respectfully be as vague and obtuse as might be necessary. What I am trying to capture is, yes, technical descriptions of them which serves to show that I am still in the process of grasping the features and facets of each while working with students and faculty. I am learning while teaching and advising my students which in turn has become a bit of an adventure. One that I am hoping I am up to the task for achieving.



Me: Feb.2018

MBA Story

There was a period in my life when I pursued a Master's of Business Administration degree. I completed approximately half of my course work until an intense change in my personal life made it impossible. At the time it would have added to my professional development for the career path I was on, and would have possibly more marketable for future employment opportunities. As I've stated though, it didn't work out.

I applied and was accepted into a MBA program at what is now known as Robert Morris University. Its main campus, in Coraopolis, Pennsylvania was a reasonable distance from my home at that time. They also had a secondary campus in Pittsburgh. I took one course a semester during night school as it fit in with my pocketbook and my work schedule. It meant a lot to me to be on a track to complete a Master's degree.

There was serendipity in that the group of graduate students that I became close to--they were all engineers. I was the only non-engineer and female of our group. I say providence or chance since I would later in life have an engineer for a partner, and also raise an engineer. In addition, when considering topics for stories related to my educational journey, I am currently the academic advisor two departments, one of which is for the engineering technologies, safety and construction department at our university.

I wondered why they would be taking this type of career track instead of pursuing a Master's in their current field. They all wanted to advance at their workplace, motivated by a variety of reasons, and an MBA was the key to supervisory positions and so on. I was surprised by this and found it fascinating. It was interesting following with them through our course work. I had a lot to learn that they already had an inside track to.

The first course I took was quantitative analysis. I wasn't too worried about it as my first graduate class, but I was in for a surprise. It was much more technical and analytical than I had first imagined. Though I scored higher on my SATs with my quantitative score than my verbal one, I was struggling. It was hard adjusting to taking a night course while juggling the drive; finding studying time; working; and trying to hold my personal life together.

Well when the next course came around everyone was talking about their grade, and I mentioned that I was happy to get it over with a 'c'. Now I was always a high achieving student but was content to comfort myself that it was my first graduate class. Wow was I ever thrown for a loop when they told me that I would have to take it over again; that only a 'b' or better would do in graduate school. Who knew? No one told me this when I applied, and there was nothing in the course materials that stated this as a requirement. This was a hard lesson that I *never* forgot. I had wasted my money and time on a grade that was unacceptable. This added to my personal difficulties, and was an unpleasant experience.

When I mapped out my personal educational journey, I realized that I should not skip this. There was no graduate student advisor; no TRIO program to assist a non-majority student like myself. All of the engineers I took class with were not first generation college students. Even the engineers that came from an international background had a parent or parents that were college-educated. They were shocked I didn't know what was required of a graduate education, and dismayed that I was obviously ill prepared for the challenges ahead.

I never got any grade less than a 'b' after that and strived to do my best under this type of scrutiny. I experienced personal satisfaction and the thrill of seeing a graduate degree perhaps in some future time.

For a marketing course, I recall writing paper for the class by doing an all-nighter since the turmoil in my first marriage made it impossible to do any other time. My instructor gave me back my paper with an 'a-'. I was embarrassed when he spoke to me after class, and said that the quality of my work was off, and if he didn't know me any better, that he would have thought I wrote the paper in one night. See, even today I am ashamed that he thought well of me but I didn't give my work my best. Though I received an 'a' for the course, it was always tainted for me since I knew that I had failed to give it my all. I've always competed with myself, and tried to push myself to excel when possible.

A failing marriage; letting myself down in graduate school are all sad memories for me. With my relationship disintegrating I could no longer afford the time and money to take classes subsequent semesters. I do have warm thoughts for these six semesters with my instructors and my engineering 'cohort'. And I guess I can look back more positively as someone who now has a Master's degree and is pursuing a doctorate.

As a coda I will add that my chemical engineer son completed his MBA while going through his own sad divorce. He is a strong survivor that persevered during a difficult time in his life. I'd like to think that I persisted and endured; that I am a survivor too.



MBA holder, S